

# THEORY AND PATTERNS OF TRAGEDY IN THE LATER NOVELLEN OF THEODOR STORM

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
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IN THE LATER NOVELLEN OF  
THEODOR STORM**

BY  
BARBARA BURNS

A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

University of St. Andrews  
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## ABSTRACT

The thesis is an attempt to refute the indictment of Storm's work as being sentimental and melancholy, arguing that such a judgment fails to take account of the writer's portrayal of tragedy in the final seventeen years of his life. Chapter One analyses a number of aspects of Storm's thought and experience which disposed him towards a tragic view of the world: this includes an examination of the possible impact of the popular philosophies of Feuerbach, the Materialists, Darwin and Schopenhauer, as well as the significance of his educational background, his career as a judge, and his attitude to family life, religion, politics and society. Chapter Two considers the aesthetic convictions underlying Storm's conception and portrayal of tragedy, looking also at the idea of the Novelle as a suitable medium for tragedy and at the relationship between the author's later work and the tragedies of Naturalism. Chapters Three to Five present a detailed study of six individual Novellen which treat themes representative of Storm's work. Chapter Three focuses on Storm's attitude to the destructive potential of prejudice and superstition in society, taking *Renate* (1878) and *Ein Doppelgänger* (1886) as examples of "The Tragedy of Social Compulsion". Chapter Four investigates his pessimistic preoccupation with the subject of heredity, discussing *John Riew'* (1885) and *Der Herr Etatsrat* (1881) as cases of "The Tragedy of Genetic Compulsion". Chapter Five is entitled "The Tragedy of Personal Responsibility": it examines *Ein Bekenntnis* (1887) and *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* (1883) as Novellen in which the leading characters incur specific moral guilt, and considers the nature and results of their attempts to atone for their crime.

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## PREFACE

It is well known that as Storm matured in years his Novellen became less sentimental and demonstrated his increasing preoccupation with themes that lent themselves to a more powerful portrayal of the tragic potential in life. Composed against the background of nineteenth-century scientific discoveries and religious scepticism, his work is different from that of the earlier writers of heroic tragedy who sought to convey the nobility of human nature and the capacity of the individual to triumph inwardly over tragic disaster. Rather Storm's interest was in the painful and futile struggle of the common man with the results of social prejudice and superstition, with an inherited physical or mental flaw or, albeit less frequently, with the consequences of personal guilt. But despite the apparent harshness of this approach to tragedy, Storm's tales still reflect his original conception of the poetic, and are often marked by some suggestion of hope, thus expressing his unwillingness to give way totally to despair, and setting his work clearly apart from the tragedies of Naturalism.

Although many critics have referred to the tragic aspect of Storm's writing, the last inquiry devoted specifically to the topic was the brief dissertation of 1914 by the author's grandson Enno Krey, entitled *Das Tragische bei Theodor Storm*. A further investigation which would take account of more recent scholarship therefore seemed overdue. Unlike Krey's work, which covers a large number of Novellen by restricting the discussion mainly to a single paragraph on each one, this analysis is much more selective. The two chapters which together form Part I consider the influences on Storm's thought in terms both of nineteenth-century ideas and of personal experience, and look at his conception of tragedy within the Novelle genre. Part II presents a detailed examination of six stories from Storm's later creative period which in relative terms are lesser known, but which treat themes representative of the thought behind his tragic achievement as a whole. The chapters into which the second part of the study is divided explore the issues of social and genetic compulsion in Storm's portrayal of tragedy and consider also the question of personal guilt. These divisions, however, are intended as an approximate guide to the aspects under discussion,

rather than as a rigid categorisation of the author's work. As will become clear, there are many points of overlap and of ambiguity, and these will be discussed when they occur.

Throughout the thesis all citations from Storm's works are taken from the fourth edition (1978) by Peter Goldammer: *Theodor Storm. Sämtliche Werke in vier Bänden*, this being the modern edition still most widely available. The references in brackets use a Roman numeral to indicate the volume, followed by the page number. The excellently annotated edition of Storm's complete works by Karl Ernst Laage and Dieter Lohmeier (Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988) has also proved helpful in the supply of background information. To avoid confusion, the Laage/Lohmeier edition is abbreviated in the notes to *Werke* (LL), and the Goldammer edition to *Werke* (G).

I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor W.N.B. Mullan who has been a constant source of help and good advice throughout the writing of this thesis and whose care and patience in reading and discussing the drafts I have greatly appreciated. Thanks are due also to the Department of Education for Northern Ireland for funding my research, and to the University of St. Andrews Travel Fund and the Stevenson Scholarship committee at the University of Glasgow for enabling me to travel to Germany to consult library and archival material. The helpfulness of Prof. K.E. Laage and of the staff both at the Storm Archive in Husum and the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek in Göttingen have made my study trips abroad a success and a pleasure, for which I am more than grateful. It is impossible to acknowledge my indebtedness to all the individuals who have contributed in some way to this finished product. Suffice it to say that my warmest thanks go to my family for their unfailing encouragement and practical help, and to numerous friends for allowing me to pick their brains, borrow their books, drink their coffee and cry on their shoulders.

## PART I

### CHAPTER ONE

#### STORM: THE INFLUENCES ON HIS THOUGHT

##### Section A: Introduction

##### A.1 Objectives

The period spanned by Theodor Storm's writing career has been described as one of transition and mediocrity in German literature<sup>1</sup>, bridging the gap between the styles of *Biedermeier* and of Naturalism. Much of what was written during this time, lacking the necessary artistic distinction to keep it alive, has long since faded into obscurity. With Storm, however, the picture is different, for although his work basically reflects the same nineteenth-century tastes and interests as that of many other authors, its impact and durability have proved significantly greater. Most students of literature today would classify Storm as a minor classic writer, and this is demonstrated by the frequent inclusion of his work in prescribed reading lists for schools and universities. One is therefore presented with the task of identifying those qualities in Storm's literary craft which set it apart from the average, and have earned it the acclaim not only of masters such as Fontane or Mann, but of generations of academics and students alike.

Perhaps it is the finesse of Storm's depiction of everyday life and relationships, together with the psychological realism in his portrayal of the tensions and conflicts which can invade and threaten that calm reality, expressed with a subtlety of style that is rich in images, while yet retaining that "strenge Simplizität des Ausdrucks, die Objectivität, d.h. Gegenständlichkeit der Darstellung"<sup>2</sup>, that has won him the admiration of so many readers. Despite all the semblance of stability and timelessness in his work, an essential element of his skill lies in the way in which he manages to suggest what one critic calls "the fragile nature of his 'safe' bourgeois civilisation"<sup>3</sup>. His stories of human failure and disaster illustrate the tragic imperfection of life; his art, as has been said more than once, is that of the requiem<sup>4</sup>, or as Herman Brause has it, "the art of uncovering the seeds of death in each human endeavour"<sup>5</sup>. This is

the overriding impression which his compositions leave with the reader, despite the idealising and distancing effects employed in an attempt to soften the blow. His late Novellen succeed admirably in achieving what Storm had in fact aimed at in his early poetry, namely "im möglichst Individuellen das möglichst Allgemeine auszusprechen"<sup>6</sup>; for by focusing on the tragic experience of one individual, truths are revealed which apply to all humanity.

Storm's heroes founder in a struggle against class distinctions, intolerance, traditionalism, superstition, social stigma and against nature itself, whether this be in the form of heredity or the more tangible forces of storm and sea. Many of the issues which his work raises, however, must remain disturbingly open and unresolved, and at the close of his Novellen there is rarely (except perhaps in *Der Schimmelreiter*) anything to be detected of the classical notion in tragedy that order has been restored and tension relieved. W. Coupe offers a penetrating expression of this when he writes:

Das manchmal so harmlos-altmodisch anmutende Lebenswerk unseres Dichters führt also in eine erschreckend moderne Welt, eine Welt, die von der Schuld zwar weiß, aber in einem fragwürdigen Verhältnis zu einer möglichen Erlösung steht, eine Welt, wo die alten Gewißheiten verlorengegangen sind und wo neue Gewißheiten fehlen. <sup>7</sup>

Storm's work has been the object of many and varied interpretations over the years, but few penetrate to the heart of the matter as Coupe has defined it, preferring instead to concentrate on issues which, even if an integral part of the issue as a whole - one thinks, for example, of the popular theme of social criticism - when treated by themselves shed insufficient light on the many facets of Storm's attitude to tragedy in all its complexity. A problem which this brings to mind concerns the way in which Storm's image has been distorted over the years as critics of various persuasions have allowed their own views to colour their interpretation of his work. Hartmut Vinçon, while not free from blame himself, draws attention to perhaps the most obvious example of this tendency when he writes: "Als nationaler Autor und als unpolitischer Schriftsteller, als Heimatdichter und Goldschnittpoet wurde er von Chauvinismus, Nationalismus, Faschismus propagandistisch benützt"<sup>8</sup>. It is well known that commentators such as Franz Stuckert, Karl Boll, Wolfgang Kayser and others, writing in the age of National Socialism, were prone to stress all that was essentially solid, Nordic and "urdeutsch"

about Storm's work. More recently, another shift in perspective has been brought about by East German critics who have sought to underline the elements of social criticism in Storm's work, again employing a rather one-sided approach. The past two decades or so of research, however, have marked a conscientious return to the original works in an attempt to uncover the true personality and purposes of Storm, and as D.S. Artiss comments, "Slowly, painfully slowly, . . . Storm is shedding his image as the purveyor of regionalism and *Heimatsdichtung*, filtered through the lens of nostalgia and sentimentality"<sup>9</sup>.

Even before some of the worst misrepresentation of Storm's work had been brought forth, Thomas Mann was undoubtedly the forerunner of those concerned to move away from the old reproach of simplistic provincialism and rescue the image of Storm as a complex and intense artist:

er setzt sich durch Anspruch, Kraft, Feinheit, Präzision, Persönlichkeit, Kunstgetragenheit gegen alles schlaff Bürgerliche ab, das an ihn "anzuknüpfen" meinte, wie er sich eben dadurch, durch sein Künstlertum einfach, schon gegen den spätromantischen Dilettantismus absetzte, von dem seine Zeit wimmelte. <sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact that Mann himself almost goes overboard at some points in his endeavour to defend the case of the writer whom he so admires<sup>11</sup>, his recognition of Storm's skill in conveying a profound sense of the potential for tragedy in life is one which is lacking in the interpretations of most early commentators. It is the purpose of this study to explore something of what Mann so pertinently expressed as the "Urgewalt der Verbindung von Menschentragik und wildem Naturgeheimnis"<sup>12</sup> in Storm's work, for in these few words Mann strikes through the conglomeration of woolly expositions which the world of literary scholarship has managed to offer to date, and formulates the very essence of Storm's mature conception of tragedy.

Stuckert also, despite his more tendentious moments, depicts the incurring of tragic guilt in Storm's artistic work in a thought-provoking manner:

Alles Leben, das sich in Erfüllung seiner individuellen Existenz kraftvoll verwirklichen will, muß notwendig schuldig werden, sowohl im sittlichen wie im metaphysischen Sinne; das ist die schmerzlich gewonnene Anschauung Storms. <sup>13</sup>

Whether or not one agrees entirely with Stuckert, it is the challenge to unravel this question of guilt, spanning aspects of both the moral



and the metaphysical worlds, and to try to determine the motivation of the catastrophe in each tragic Novelle, which presents one of the most intricate problems of Storm's work.

The purpose of this chapter is to lay the necessary foundation stones for a detailed study of tragedy in Storm's later Novellen. Before proceeding to examine Storm's personal conception of tragedy, and then in this light to consider several of the most powerful tragic Novellen themselves, it is necessary to do two things. The first, which will be covered in section B of this chapter, is to place Storm in the nineteenth-century context in which he lived; in other words to sketch a brief outline of the concepts and theories propounded by the major contributors to contemporary ideas at the time of Storm, and to suggest the impression which some of these may have made on his thinking. The second task, which will be undertaken in section C, is to consider a number of particular aspects of Storm's view of the world, such as his socio-political stance, his attitude to religion, his stress on the importance of family life, and the influence of his upbringing and his subsequent legal career; for an awareness of the influences on his thought and development in all of these spheres is central to a fuller understanding of his art. The remainder of the present section will seek firstly to indicate the major difficulties which arise where any study of Storm is concerned, and secondly, in the sub-section "Development into Tragedy", to point out and dislodge the stumbling-block created by a tradition of Storm-criticism which has failed to recognise even his later work as being truly tragic.

## A.2 Problems

No inquirer into Storm's view of the world can proceed far before he encounters three basic problems. The first of these is that Storm was not inclined to formulate or record his thoughts in a manner which left them easily accessible to posterity. He offered relatively little in the way of theoretical background concepts as the basis to his art, or of direct guidelines to interpretation of the Novellen themselves. Despite the fact that he was a prolific correspondent, he differed from other accomplished writers in that his letters, as well as his diary entries, concerned themselves only infrequently with deeper issues of thought. Thus it is difficult to build up a

comprehensive picture of the man himself, his philosophy of life and the notions underlying his work. Many passages in the Novellen appear to shed additional light on these subjects, but while recourse to the literary work can often be beneficial, a problem remains in the fact that what is written as part of a fictional story cannot necessarily be taken as the author's private view.

The second and more intricate problem which follows on from this lies in the extremely subjective and "provisional" nature of many of the thoughts and reactions which Storm did record, especially as a young man. It is interesting that his father, writing to his brother-in-law Esmarch regarding Theodor's intention to marry Constanze, warned him in advance of what he saw to be his son's major failing, namely his moodiness: "Ich kann mir nicht verhehlen, daß die alleinige Bedenklichkeit in meines Sohnes Charakter liegt, der, wie ich bekennen muß, launenhaft ist"<sup>14</sup>. Valid therefore as certain of Storm's remarks may be, perhaps as indications of a first impression, or as thoughts coloured by a passing state of mind, they cannot always be taken literally as guarantees of his firm and considered opinion. An example of this is found in a passage describing Storm's very negative reaction to the typical student lifestyle as he encountered it at the beginning of his university career. Feeling lonely and depressed, his initial feeling was that students appeared to belong to one of two groups, either the monotonously studious, or the equally disagreeable drunken and licentious (IV, 532). Looking back a few years later, however, when he had made good friends who did not fit into either of these categories, he regarded his initial judgement as having been hasty and unjust, and wrote in large print across the top of the page the castigation "Dummes Zeug"<sup>15</sup>. Unfortunately perhaps for future generations of readers, Storm did not thus annotate all his private writings in later life in order to clarify his lasting and overriding opinion on particular matters. Rather, it is part of the challenge presented to the student of his work to distinguish sentiments which were merely the result of moodiness from those which represent true expressions of his deeper thought.

Another example of Storm's somewhat temperamental personality can be seen in the baffling variety of feelings which he expressed through the years regarding his attempts to pursue a legal and a

literary career simultaneously. Depending on the extent of pressure being brought to bear on him in his legal work, and on how much his literary production suffered as a result, his attitude concerning the combination of the two occupations could change from sheer frustration to contentment and even enthusiasm. It is important therefore to examine all of his comments on the subject together in order to avoid an unbalanced impression. Unfortunately, research has not been helped by the famous but misleading judgement of Ferdinand Tönnies who wrote: "Theodor Storm war eine Persönlichkeit, geschlossen durch ihre Harmonie, durch ihre selbständige Kraft, durch ihre Wahrhaftigkeit"<sup>16</sup>. The word "harmony" is not best chosen here, and Tönnies' suggestion is refuted by further examples of inconsistencies in Storm's work which inevitably emerge in the course of any study of his work. Nonetheless, if one is aware of the problems involved, some sense of harmony in the presentation of Storm's overall views can be restored, but only by a careful collation of all the varying statements available on any given topic.

The third problematic area which it is necessary briefly to consider at this stage follows on from that of Storm's moodiness. Again it concerns apparent contradictions which threaten to confuse the reader, but here it has to do with major disparities in Storm's personality and world-view which present themselves continually and are integral features of his writing, as opposed to isolated utterances which spring from a passing mood. The most obvious example of this is the constantly alternating struggle within Storm between optimism and pessimism. It is perhaps hard to believe that the man who said exultantly: "Ich liebe das Leben grenzlos; ich möchte immer leben"<sup>17</sup>, was the same man who, in one of his darker moments when he felt the burden of life's unanswered questions weighing heavily upon him, wrote to his wife of "die leise Furcht, daß im letzten Grunde doch nichts Bestand habe, worauf unser Herz baut; die Ahnung, daß man am Ende einsam verweht und verlorengeht; die Angst vor der Nacht des Vergessenwerdens, dem nicht zu entrinnen ist"<sup>18</sup>, or again in the context of death:

Einschlafen, fühl ich, will das Ding, die Seele,  
Und näher kommt die rätsellohe Nacht. <sup>19</sup>

The impression which one gains is therefore one of a man who in his private thought hovered almost helplessly between hope and despair,

and indeed conveyed this same ambivalence in his artistic work by vacillating from a portrayal of the harshest realities of human existence one moment to a gentle idealisation of it the next. Storm's entire life and work is characterised by this conflicting feeling of love of life and inner torment over evanescence, expressed so pertinently in *Auf dem Staatshof* as "jener Schauer, der aus dem Verlangen nach Erdenlust und dem schmerzlichen Gefühl ihrer Vergänglichkeit so wunderbar gemischt ist" (I, 617 f.). Despite his earlier zest for living, however, it was unarguably the weight of pessimism which began to prevail as Storm approached old age. While he remained true to a conception of art which insisted on the importance of the positive and the poetic, nonetheless his writings convey an intensification of the feelings of terrible loneliness and gloom, and the individual stands out increasingly as "ein verlorener Punkt in dem unermessenen und unverstandenen Raum"<sup>20</sup>, filled with a strange feeling of dread in the face of forces that are mysterious and threatening.

Another disparity which stands out strongly in Storm's view of the world is the one between his stance on the one hand as a freethinker and his attraction to the supernatural and to various psychic phenomena on the other. Although he was a confirmed atheist and a supporter of the progress of science and reason, his work reveals a striking interest in second sight, ghosts, superstition, strange dreams and the daemonic. The only explanation which Storm himself offered, and which to some extent refutes the suggestion that these two aspects of his personality are in fact contradictory, is found in a letter of 1882 to Keller:

nicht zu vergessen, daß wir hier an der Grenze Nordfrieslands, wie in Schottland, uns in der Heimat des zweiten Gesichts befinden. Ich stehe diesen Dingen im einzelnen Falle zwar zweifelnd oder gar ungläubig, im allgemeinen dagegen sehr anheimstellend gegenüber; nicht, daß ich an Un- oder Übernatürliches glaubte, wohl aber, daß das Natürliche, was nicht unter die alltäglichen Wahrnehmungen fällt, bei weitem noch nicht erkannt ist.<sup>21</sup>

This argument that natural science may eventually supply a rational explanation for such phenomena is perhaps less than fully convincing, but still it need not necessarily be maintained that respect for science and belief in the spirit world are mutually exclusive. What appears here at first to be an incongruity may not present such difficulty if the reader is prepared to take a broader

view of parapsychological reality.

It is possible to argue that a certain number of inconsistencies are to be expected in the thought of any writer, especially if his views are clearly seen to change and develop as he matures. But Storm displays such inconsistencies probably more than most. Rather than attempt to document them all at this early stage, however, it must suffice to draw attention to this as a potential problem to be borne in mind throughout the remainder of the present study.

### A.3 Development into Tragedy

It may be held that to embark upon a study of tragedy in Storm's work is to commit oneself to an essentially irrelevant and futile exercise, given the assumption - and it is one that abounds - that his works are not genuinely tragic. It is, however, the purpose of this dissertation to demonstrate such a judgement to be a superficial and a mistaken one which fails to take full account of Storm's most powerful work in the final sixteen years of his literary career.

A clear development can be observed in the work of Storm from lyric poetry into what is at first somewhat sentimental prose, and moving on gradually to a style which is increasingly compelling and profound. This progressive change of approach is reflected also in Storm's own statements about his writing. We think, for example, of the famous comment of 1882: "Meine Novellistik ist aus meiner Lyrik erwachsen"<sup>22</sup>, a notion which has been altered by 1885 when he writes: "Meine Novellistik hat meine Lyrik völlig verschluckt"<sup>23</sup>, and is brought to its climax finally in the words recorded by his daughter Gertrud: "'Wenn ich jünger wäre,' sagte der Dichter nach Vollendung des Schimmelreiters, 'so würde ich zum Drama übergehen.'"<sup>24</sup>. (Whether he would have been successful as a dramatist is a separate issue, but probably the comment is inspired by the fact that the drama was still regarded as the prestigious form.) In a newspaper article of 1856 it was written of Storm: "Sein Genre ist nicht groß, aber er ist groß in seinem Genre"<sup>25</sup>, but this was a credit awarded to him before he had proved his talents to span more than one genre. A moving lyric poet, whose verse often exuded a gentle aura of late Romanticism, and a distinguished Poetic Realist with a vivid awareness of the struggles and problems of

existence, as well as an appreciation of its beauty, he displays at the very end of his literary career a growing flair for the dynamic and dramatic which forms the most impressive vehicle of all for his portrayal of tragedy and takes a step beyond the narrower bounds of the melancholic sentimentality with which he had earlier been associated.

With regard to this problem of premature packaging and labelling, rarely has there been so marked an instance of an author's early overnight success leading to the ultimate detriment of his reputation as was the case for Storm with *Immensee*. The difficulty does not arise out of any intrinsic fault in the work itself; on the contrary, it was hailed as a work of considerable poetic achievement, appealing with accomplished style and fine intuition to the delicate sensibilities of his readership. The young Theodor Storm was an undisputed master of subdued and tender tones, a skilful creator of idyllic natural settings and lingering memories tinged with bitter-sweetness. Even if much of this is what the modern reader may despise as "Kitsch", nonetheless it was highly in vogue at the time, and *Immensee* swept Europe as a best-seller. The problem, however, was that the literary commentators were so gripped by the enduring impact of this particular Novelle that they overlooked, or chose to ignore, the fact that Storm developed and moved on to greater things. The impression rendered by this first short work, characteristic though it may be of much of Storm's earlier writing, falls far short of conveying the full depth and maturity of the stories produced by the same writer after the reflection and often painful experience of the years had added a further dimension to his creative power. The later Novellen represent a strong step forward from the former late-Romantic sentimentality to a new profundity of tragic impact, a different type of writing which, according to Storm's own theory, should leave in the reader the effect of "einer herben Nachdenklichkeit"<sup>26</sup>.

One can identify the Novelle *Draußen im Heidedorf* (1872) as marking for Storm a significant point in his literary career, for it was at this stage that he felt he had struck a new and deeper note in his portrayal of human life and character. The language he uses now becomes more direct and objective, and he leaves behind him a good deal, albeit not all of his former inclination towards poetic

embellishment. Storm himself described this change in artistic approach in a letter to Emil Kuh in which he wrote concerning *Draußen im Heidedorf*:

Ich glaube, darin bewiesen zu haben, daß ich auch eine Novelle ohne den Dunstkreis einer gewissen Stimmung (das heißt einer sich nicht aus den vorgetragenen Tatsachen von selbst beim Leser entwickelnden, sondern vom Verfasser a priori herzugebrachten Stimmung) schreiben kann. <sup>27</sup>

The characters in the later Novellen are much more in touch with the world of reality than the earlier resigned and passive heroes, and display a strength of will which is prepared to pit itself against the negative workings of fate and refuses to surrender easily to defeat. This characteristic is typical in particular of the leading figures in the Novellen composed at the peak of Storm's career, for example Junker Hinrich in *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*, John Hansen in *Ein Doppelgänger*, and above all Hauke Haien in *Der Schimmelreiter*. In these final works the portrayal of the tragic lot of man is greatly intensified as individuals are seen to take up the struggle with the hostile forces of nature and of society, ultimately however (arguably in all cases except that of Hauke Haien) only to break down in helplessness and despair, or to be destroyed physically by an implacable fate. The change which is gradually brought about in Storm's private view of the world, in his rejection of a personal faith in God and in immortality, and in his bitterly increased awareness of the devastating powers of heredity and of society, finds expression in his works through the depiction of a reality which is incomparably harsher than the touching scenes of earlier years. Thus one can identify a steady development which sets out on its course from the elegiac and conservative features typical of the *Biedermeier* age or of early Poetic Realism, and ends up conveying a mood of inevitable destruction and death which becomes widespread towards the end of the century in German thought and literature, perhaps to some extent anticipating the spirit of Naturalism which was soon to come.

In view of this clear development, it therefore seems puzzling that in 1880, after the publication of such tragic masterpieces as *Aquis submersus*, *Renate* and *Carsten Curator*, the young critic Erich Schmidt, in the first major literary appreciation of Storm's work, should write:

Von der Hand weicht er in der Poesie dem Herben und Gewaltigen aus . . . Die Resignation seiner Menschen bekundet die süße Wollust elegischer Rückblicke, verwundend zugleich und das

Balsamfläschchen darreichend. Wo zerstörerische Mächte eingreifen, wird ihr feindliches Walten nie rücksichtslos verdeutlicht . . . Storm will rühren, nicht erschüttern, und ist in jedem Falle der lang nachklingenden Wirkung sicher. <sup>28</sup>

This caricature of Storm as a writer who was interested in producing no more than a gentle, touching effect is one from which even today he has not entirely recovered, and it is all the more surprising and indefensible when one considers that Schmidt was familiar above all with Storm's later works, even reading them at their manuscript stage in order to offer help and advice. In July 1876 Storm had written to Wilhelm Petersen:

Eins sollte mir leid tun! - Wenn meine Dichtung nur rührend wäre; sie sollte *erschütternd* sein, sonst taugt sie nichts. Ich glaube auch, daß sie sonst so gewirkt hat. <sup>29</sup>

This quotation is one of the most crucial for our argument in that it clearly demonstrates how Storm, aware of the weakness of earlier Novellen, had now entered a new stage of development and was striving to create a genuine tragic effect. The extent to which he succeeded in attaining this goal will demand fuller consideration later, but certainly it is false to maintain that he deliberately avoids that which is painful or merciless in an attempt to gloss over the less pleasant aspects of human experience.

Erich Schmidt was not the only critic guilty of misrepresentation. Another whose comments were to perform a great disservice to Storm was Theodor Fontane. Although he was a self-confessed admirer of Storm's poetry and maintained a correspondence with him for a number of years, he displayed rather ungentlemanly malice in his mockery of Storm's "Husumerei" and "Provinzialsimpelei"<sup>30</sup>. These two derisive terms, catching both because of their succinctness and because of the prestige of the man who coined them, became the most frequently quoted words associated with the name of Storm. These expressions came to represent what was reputedly the essence of Storm's work in a nutshell, and made it virtually impossible for any reader to approach the works without his judgement being clouded by erroneous presupposition.

There have been numerous others who have followed in the same critical tradition, seeing in Storm a static, uncomplicated provincial with a restricted lifestyle; a conscientious plodder, struggling to meet the material needs of a large family, rather than an artist of unique brilliance writing with the urgency of a highly creative mind.



Wherever the truth may lie between these two extremes, it should not be forgotten that one ought not to judge Storm from a modern, twentieth-century perspective; for in accusing him of indulgent, late-Romantic escapism, the fact is overlooked that the stories of idyllic reminiscence were precisely what his early *Biedermeier* readership demanded, and so to a large extent he was merely catering for contemporary taste. But even in the relatively early period, Novellen such as *Auf dem Staatshof* and *Im Schloß* clearly display focuses of interest normally beyond the scope of *Biedermeier* writing. Here we find Storm already beginning to explore important nineteenth-century issues such as the power of heredity, the conflict of science versus religion and the decline of the nobility, thus demonstrating the allegation of gauche provincialism to be an unfair one. His roots may have been deeply in Husum, and family life, together with his professional work as judge in a small community may well have been the centre around which his interests revolved, but as he himself so pertinently expressed it: "Ich bedarf äußerlich der Enge, um innerlich ins Weite zu gehen"<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, there is no doubt that Storm soon left behind him the folk tales of Lena Wies and Hans Räuber to which he had thrilled as a boy, and as the years of the sentimental *Biedermeier* style gradually gave way to a more realistic form with greater potential for the depiction of tragedy, his work is seen to span an ever increasing breadth and to speak forth a message which, far from being limited to the parochial bounds of Husum, is universally valid.

## Section B: The Nineteenth-century Climate of Ideas

### B.1 The Significance of Contemporary Thought

There are few men, except perhaps for ascetics and hermits, whose lives remain virtually untouched by the events and the spirit of their times, and it is quite false to claim that Storm was either of these. A major misrepresentation of which Storm critics have in the past been guilty lies in this area. An unduly simple image has been nurtured of him as a homely and unpretentious individual, rooted in the unique identity and traditions of his native region, and displaying neither interest in nor acquaintance with the great intellectual problems of his day. Stuckert stresses the "plant-like" simplicity of his inner development<sup>32</sup>, suggesting that a lack of receptiveness for serious philosophical issues spared him the slightest mental struggle or anguish, and Erich Schmidt asserts with confidence that Storm's work does not bear for future generations the stamp of a particular age<sup>33</sup>. A puzzling incongruity therefore presents itself between the picture of oblivious detachment painted by certain critics and the biographical evidence to hand. This includes not only the well attested fact that Storm was an avid reader of all kinds of journals and periodicals<sup>34</sup>, but also that he was a member of two distinguished literary circles where much would be discussed of developments in the world of contemporary thought. Diary entries and excerpts from letters to friends, as well as passages from the poems and Novellen themselves, make it clear to the reader that Storm certainly did not pass through life unaffected by the great issues of his day. Unlike his contemporary Keller, for example, he did not grow up under the direct influence of specific philosophical theories, nor would one attempt to rank him among the eminent thinkers of his century; nonetheless his writings, as we shall proceed to examine, plainly reveal the pervading influence of the nineteenth-century climate of ideas.

It is interesting to note the atmosphere of expectation recorded at the beginning of this century of enormous change and progress in every field, whether it be industrial, scientific or philosophical. In the introduction to his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, published in 1807, Hegel wrote:

Es ist übrigens nicht schwer zu sehen, daß unsere Zeit eine Zeit

der Geburt und des Übergangs zu einer neuen Periode ist. Der Geist hat mit der bisherigen Welt seines Daseins und Vorstellens gebrochen und steht im Begriffe, es in die Vergangenheit hinab zu versenken . . . Der bildende Geist . . . löst ein Teilchen des Baues seiner vorhergehenden Welt nach dem anderen auf . . . Dies allmähliche Zerbröckeln, das die Physiognomie des Ganzen nicht veränderte, wird durch den Aufgang unterbrochen, der ein Blitz, in einem Male das Gebilde der neuen Welt hinstellt. <sup>35</sup>

This sense of observing the edifice of a new world rising up before one is not uncommon in the history of thought and society in the nineteenth century. But still it is an apt picture to describe the radical transformation brought about in both speculative and practical spheres in the age of what may be called the Darwinian Revolution. This was the age in which Thomas Huxley coined the term "agnosticism" and in which this was made a valid and culturally acceptable position for the thinking man; it was the age which saw the relentless advance of research of all kinds into nature and history which imperceptibly but irrevocably revolutionised traditional views of the world, the age in which a zoological theory seemed suddenly to throw light and intelligibility into the most diverse provinces of knowledge.

Before the findings of Darwin were published, the century was already marked by increasing materialism and secularisation. Traditional religion was becoming more and more aware of the rapid growth in both scope and authority of the sciences of nature. Knowledge for the modern man was being reduced to mean the physical sciences alone, with anything outside this realm being regarded as strictly unknowable. Thus the issue of science and religion, their compatibility or otherwise, grew to be a matter of supreme concern not only to theology, but to ordinary piety. As early as the 1830s and early 1840s, major works were published which examined the nature and function of religion as an expression of the human consciousness, and Christianity in particular became a subject for historical investigation and critical reflexion.

## B.2 Strauß

D.F. Strauß was to some extent a disciple of Hegel: he saw Christianity as a representation of eternal truths, a body of symbolical doctrines, portraying the ideal unity of finite and infinite. The fundamental weakness, however, which he saw in Hegel's very

abstract interpretation of Christianity lay in its failure to appreciate the historical personality of Jesus Christ himself. Thus in his major work *Das Leben Jesu* (1835), he set himself the task of rendering a strictly historical account of Christ's life. Such were his presuppositions that he eliminated the miraculous as being outside the sphere of history, and he portrayed Jesus purely as a human being who had made such a profound impression on his followers that their myth-making imagination had transformed him into the divine and supernatural Christ.

Strauß' treatment of the Gospel material was certainly drastic, but at the same time it was not his intention to undermine or dissolve religious faith in the essential truth of Christianity. Rather, he conceived himself to be reinterpreting it in a way that would make it acceptable to "reasonable" men, and, on typically Hegelian lines, to be underlining the basic *idea* of Christ, namely that of humanity moving towards the perfection in which the process of history was to be fulfilled. But despite his noble intentions, the work was highly offensive to orthodox Christianity, which held to its belief in miracle and in the supernatural; and its impact was such that it seemed to be a strong nail in the coffin of conservative faith. Its significance, however, was considerable for the development of the "historical-critical" approach to the Bible, and it set the tone for much that was to follow in the nineteenth-century religious debate.

### B.3 Feuerbach

Another major contributor to the world of thought at this time was Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72), a man whose writings represent one of the most influential systems of his century. In his most famous work, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), Feuerbach developed a basic idea which was simple and even ancient: he attempted to explain religion, especially the Christian religion, by way of a psychological study of man's fears and needs. Man, aware of his weakness and his dependence on external reality, begins by venerating the forces of nature or particular natural phenomena; he does not, however, rise to the concept of gods or of God without self-projection. Thus in what is called Feuerbach's "projection theory" of religion, God is seen to be "nothing other than" the essence of man and his attributes, which is projected into a

transcendent sphere and deified:

Gott als der Inbegriff aller Realitäten oder Vollkommenheiten [ist] nichts anderes . . . als der zum Nutzen des beschränkten Individuums compendiarisch zusammengefaßte Inbegriff der unter die Menschen verteilten, im Laufe der Weltgeschichte sich realisierenden Eigenschaften der Gattung. <sup>37</sup>

This critique of religion therefore basically consisted of the reversal of the Biblical idea that "God created man in his own image" (Genesis 1; 27). The major problem for Feuerbach in this self-projection was that it expressed man's alienation from himself, "die Entzweiung des Menschen mit sich selbst"<sup>37</sup>, as he described it. By projecting his essence into a transcendent sphere and objectifying it as God, man reduces himself to a miserable and sinful creature, and in Feuerbach's view, it is only when a man understands this psychological process that he overcomes the self-alienation involved in religion and recovers faith in himself and in his own powers for future development. Feuerbach can therefore be said to have substituted anthropology for theology, and by this substitution to have made man his own highest object, an end in himself. Maintaining that faith in God and love for one's fellow man are mutually exclusive, since one cannot concentrate on transcendence and on the world to come while at the same time fulfilling the practical command to love one's neighbour, he promoted the view that humanity will only be able truly to mature and improve when it has abolished the idea of God:

Dabei müssen wir an die Stelle der Gottesliebe die Menschenliebe als die einzige, wahre Religion setzen, an die Stelle des Gottesglaubens den Glauben des Menschen an sich selbst. <sup>38</sup>

The success of the work was to a large extent due to the fact that Feuerbach reduced religion to humanism in a most ingenious way by saying that man venerates his own being as an alien being; and in thus giving all honour to God, deprives himself. It was his purpose to stress and enhance the value of earthly life, to invest the individual with a new dignity and responsibility and a fresh awareness of his own potential, independent of any subjective, transcendent power:

Jeder Augenblick des Lebens ist erfülltes Sein, von unendlicher Bedeutung, um seiner selbst willen, durch sich selbst gesetzt, in sich selbst befriedigt, uneingeschränkte Bejahung seiner selbst.

In undermining what he saw to be the illusion and deception of orthodox faith, he pointed to the social progress which in his view

could be gained only through the channels of atheistic humanism. It was this work which made Feuerbach a significant public figure in German thought. It represented a major break with the dominant speculative tradition of German idealist philosophy and promised to be the key to a complete reinterpretation of both theology and metaphysics. Feuerbach's critique of religion built on, but overshadowed the historical critique of Christian dogma and theology which had been instituted by Strauß and others. It introduced an empiricist and materialist-oriented humanism into a philosophical tradition in which this emphasis had been alien, and was as radical and outspoken a denial of the existence of God as the nineteenth century had to offer.

#### B.4 Materialism

The work of Feuerbach helped to establish the naturalistic attitude proclaimed a decade later in Germany by the materialist movement. Natural science had undergone a rapid expansion in the 1840s, and the respect formerly given to philosophers in the time of Hegel was being replaced by the prestige associated with scientific achievement. As materialists and popularisers of science, few individuals influenced public opinion in the nineteenth century more than Karl Vogt, Jacob Moleschott and Ludwig Büchner. These men basically adopted Feuerbach's radical conclusions, and by modifying them to fit their new context, proclaimed them as if they were scientific results. The basic tenets of their philosophy have been identified as fourfold: firstly, that there is an independently existing world; secondly, that human beings, like all other subjects, are material entities; thirdly, that the human mind does not exist as an entity distinct from the human body; and fourthly, that there is no God (nor any other non-human being) whose mode of existence is not that of material entities<sup>40</sup>.

Vogt and Moleschott were physiologists, Büchner (brother of the famous Georg) a medical doctor, and the subjects they wrote about clearly reflected the interests of men of science, centring on the controversy in the newly developed field of physiology. It was especially the vague idea of a "vital force" which in their view had to be combated and expelled from physiological enquiries, and this general antagonism towards Christian faith is indicated by the title of

Vogt's polemical work against the highly respected Göttingen physiologist Rudolf Wagner, *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* (1855), literally: "Faith of a Charcoal-burner and Science", perhaps better rendered as "Blind Faith and Science". In a lecture in Göttingen in 1854 entitled "Menschenschöpfung und Seelensubstanz"<sup>41</sup>, Wagner had personally defended the existence of an immortal soul and the origin of man from a single pair, not because these were the provable conclusions of science, but because their denial would be morally reprehensible. Vogt, who was strongly antireligious, set out in his work to oppose these two major issues of monogenism and immortality which Wagner had supported.

Just as *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* was written in response to the ideas propagated by a particular individual, so too Jacob Moleschott's major work, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens* (1852), constituted an attack on the work of the renowned chemist Justus Liebig who sanctioned inferences from natural science to the realm of religion. Liebig was soundly castigated for having said that knowledge of the laws of nature points to a being, "zu dessen Anschauung und Erkenntniß die Sinne nicht mehr hinreichen"<sup>42</sup>. Seeking to demonstrate this defence of revelation to be a basic error, Moleschott insisted: "Es ist in unserem Verstande nichts, was nicht eingegangen wäre durch das Thor unserer Sinne"<sup>43</sup>. In Moleschott's view, the whole history of the universe could be explained in terms of an original matter (Stoff), of which force or energy (Kraft) is an intrinsic and essential attribute. Life was in his view simply a state of matter itself: "Das Leben ist nicht der Ausfluß einer ganz besonderen Kraft, es ist vielmehr ein Zustand des Stoffes"<sup>44</sup>, and he stressed his conviction that as Feuerbach had prepared the way for the destruction of all anthropomorphic, teleological interpretations of the world, it was the task of modern science to continue and complete this work:

Es hieße Eulen nach Athen tragen, wenn man in dem Lande, in welchem Ludwig Feuerbach seine unsterbliche Kritik vom Wesen des Christenthums geschrieben hat, die Beispiele häufen wollte, um den unlöslichen Widerspruch zu erörtern, in welchem die Allmacht eines Weltenschöpfers mit Naturgesetzen steht . . . Die Fahne wird siegreich durch die Erforschung des Stoffes und stofflicher Bewegung. <sup>45</sup>

Undoubtedly the best-known product of German materialism is Ludwig Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff* (1855) which took its title from one

of Moleschott's chapter headings, and was a conscious attempt to bring together into one place and to make explicit all the implications of the materialistic tendencies which others had been expressing. The author condemned out of hand all philosophy which could not be understood by the ordinary educated reader, and for this reason the work enjoyed considerable popularity, going through a total of twenty-one editions and being translated into seventeen foreign languages. The book had as a subtitle *Empirisch naturphilosophische Studien*, and Büchner emphasised throughout the opposition between supernaturalism and realism: "Irgend welche Kenntniß, welche über die uns umgebende Welt hinausreichte, irgend welches übernatürliche, absolute Wissen ist unmöglich und nicht vorhanden"<sup>46</sup>. Büchner relied heavily on his predecessors in his elaboration of the basic presupposition that there is no force without matter, and no matter without force. If he could show from natural science that force could never be separated from a material substratum, then the traditional concepts of transcendence and the supernatural could ultimately be denied:

Ausgehend von der Erkenntnis jenes unverrückbaren Verhältnisses zwischen Kraft und Stoff als unzerstörbarer Grundlage muß die empirisch-philosophische Naturbetrachtung zu Resultaten kommen, welche mit Entschiedenheit jede Art von Supernaturalismus und Idealismus aus der Erklärung des natürlichen Geschehens verbannen und sich dieses letztere als gänzlich unabhängig von dem Zuthun irgend welcher äußeren, außer den Dingen stehenden Gewalten vorstellen. <sup>47</sup>

Many thinkers, however, resented the confidence with which the materialists spoke of the powers of natural science, especially since their work clearly constituted a premature generalisation, lacking in profundity and running rough-shod over intricate problems of thought. The materialists condemned Kant for his ideas on the mysterious, unknowable "thing-in-itself", and for the fact that he wanted, like the theologians, to preserve a place for the unknown. Büchner's rather dogmatic reply to this was that knowledge, and not admission of ignorance, was the true goal of science<sup>48</sup>. He thought he had rid science of metaphysics; no one, he claimed, could ever expect to explain the ultimate why or the ultimate ground of things.

There is no doubt that the writings of the materialist school, and in particular those of Büchner, tended to spread among the reading public a large amount of useful knowledge referring to the



discoveries which science had made in the course of the first half of the nineteenth century, by which great regions of knowledge had been opened out or remodelled. Their lack of hesitation in proclaiming that the spiritual was wholly accountable in terms of the material was sensational and appealed to the non-scientist, but to the deeper intellect it was only pseudo-scientific, and constituted a popularised philosophy which was over-simplistic and unsatisfactory. The often quoted slogan of the times, "Der Mensch ist, was er ißt", coined by Feuerbach, was one which he later realised had marked a sad era for philosophy:

Der Satz: der Mensch ist, was er ißt, von mir in der Anzeige von Moleschotts "Lehre der Nahrungsmittel für das Volk" 1850 ausgesprochen, ist der einzige Satz, der von meinen bekanntlich längst 'verschollenen' Schriften noch heute gewissen Leuten in den Ohren klingt, aber nur als ein die Ehre der deutschen Philosophie verletzender Mißklang. <sup>49</sup>

Even the strong criticism, however, which the materialist movement encountered, was not sufficient to prevent a second wave of this thought which appealed for support to the Darwinian theory of evolution. This demonstrated for them that the origin and development of man was simply a phase of cosmic evolution in general, that man's higher activities could adequately be explained in terms of this evolution, without it being necessary to introduce the notion of creative activity by a supramundane being. The fact that there is no necessary connection between the scientific hypothesis of evolution and philosophical materialism was indeed clear to some minds at the time; but there were many people who either welcomed or attacked the hypothesis, as the case might be, because they thought that materialism was the natural conclusion to draw from it.

### B.5 Darwin

After the publication of his *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859, Darwin wrote:

Many years ago I was strongly advised by a friend never to introduce anything about religion in my works, if I wished to advance science in England; and this led me not to consider the mutual bearing of the two subjects. <sup>50</sup>

Despite the fact, however, that in the *Origin of Species* Darwin did not explicitly extend his theory to include man, and that he largely avoided any consideration of its religious implications, people were nonetheless quick to make what seemed the obvious assumptions. The work represented a direct and startling challenge to immemorial

religious beliefs concerning not only creation and the fall of man - and with it his redemption - but the whole conception of the relations of natural and supernatural<sup>51</sup>. The Darwinian thesis, with its talk of "natural selection" and the fortuitous play of the factors in the struggle for existence, appeared to surrender the whole of life to the rough and ready operation of a purely random process. In the general theory of evolution and the doctrine of the descent of the highest from the lowest, it seemed to take away all special dignity from the human mind and spirit, all the freedom and the nobility of pure reason and autonomous choice. The character and fate of man suddenly seemed to hinge on factors over which he had no control, namely the hereditary legacy of his forefathers, and on chance; and the higher strivings of humanity were reduced to the level of an ignoble tumult of animal impulses and desires. Somewhat removed as this perception may have been from a more considered interpretation of what Darwin actually said - and it is important that this distinction be indicated - it expresses what may be called popular Darwinism, theoretically of little worth, but practically possessed of great powers of attraction and propagandism. These were the ideas which entered like a ferment into the world of thought as the *Origin of Species* swept through Europe in many translations, and thus it was that a gloomy feeling of biological determinism took its hold as every aspect of the individual seemed to be pre-shaped and governed by a principle of mysterious law.

At this point it is appropriate to return to Storm himself and consider the effect of these trends in ideas upon him. The third section of this chapter will outline something of the Feuerbachian influence and the spirit of materialism in general to be detected in his statements on religion, so this can be set aside for the moment. As far as Darwinism was concerned, this was undoubtedly the contemporary issue of greatest importance to him. The new thoughts of popular Darwinism, widespread as they had become, appear to have made an especially deep impression upon him. Although he did not set out by any means properly to examine the theories or to make any clear judgements, certain concepts obviously were familiar to him. One cannot, for example, help but think of ideas such as the "struggle for existence" or the "survival of the fittest" when one reads Storm's well-known words: "Das Bestehen der Welt beruht darauf, daß alles sich gegenseitig frißt, oder vielmehr, das Mächtigere

immer das Schwächere"<sup>52</sup>. This indeed is not the only striking parallel to be found. It is interesting to note how both men were moved by observation of the natural world around them to reject the idea of an all-loving God. Darwin's theory highlighted the enormous amount of necessary waste and suffering in nature in the ruthless struggle for life. At the end of the *Origin of Species* he did try to argue, briefly, that the results of all this suffering are in the end "good"; all the variations selected work for the good of their possessors, and further evolutionary "progress" is certain<sup>53</sup>. But his private belief, as he expressed it a year later, was that the evidence of imperfection, waste and suffering in nature was not conducive to belief in a benevolent Creator:

I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the *Ichneumonidae* with the express intention of their feeding within the live bodies of Caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice. <sup>54</sup>

This is strongly reminiscent of the personal attitude of Storm where he enters in his diary his own reaction to the cruel reality of the natural world:

Ich habe eben einer Spinne zugesehen, wie sie eine kleine zappelnde Fliege einwickelte und anbiß, und begreife aufs Neue immer wieder nicht, wie denkgeschulte Menschen die Erschaffung dieser grausamen Welt einem allliebenden und barmherzigen Gott zuschreiben können. <sup>55</sup>

Despite the fact that his understanding of the biological aspects was incomplete, the problem of heredity in particular was a constant, bitterly real issue for Storm through his experience with his eldest son Hans, and his resulting poetic treatment of this process by which the characters and consequent actions of individuals are predetermined and from which they cannot be set free is developed to deep tragic effect. This idea of the threat from within, by which a person is fated by his blood inheritance, is poignantly expressed in a letter of 1884 to Mommsen:

man sagte einmal: das moderne Schicksal sind die Nerven; ich sage: es ist die Vererbung, das Angeborene, dem nicht auszuweichen ist und wodurch man trotz ehrlichen Kampfes dennoch mit der Weltordnung im Conflict auch wohl zum Untergang kommt. <sup>56</sup>

This attitude to the power of heredity which sees it as leading inevitably to conflict and destruction is typical of Storm. He viewed the individual as being but a link in a chain of genetic events, subject to the cruel workings of a mechanism over which he has no control. He highlighted almost exclusively the negative factors of

heredity, the disastrous results of an inherited tendency to alcoholism, irascibility, violence, passion or foolishness. In this respect he therefore diverged significantly from the Darwinian position which regarded the positive and most suitable characteristics as being the ones which were passed on to future generations, since these were the ones which had secured the existence of their forerunners.

Although Storm's tendency to draw such drastically negative conclusions with regard to the question of heredity may appear to display a very limited awareness of the true content and thrust of Darwin's thesis, at other times he expresses himself in such a way as to indicate remarkable familiarity with it. This is the case, for example, in *Im Schloß*, the Novelle which reveals most explicitly Storm's interest in the issues of modern science and the question of their compatibility or otherwise with traditional Christian belief. Here he uses Darwin's famous and extremely influential simile between nature's production of new species and the growth of a great branching tree. Anna, the central character of the story, who has had explained to her this idea of the evolutionary development of man, says:

Ich sah den Baum des Menschengeschlechtes heraufsteigen, Trieb um Trieb, in naturwüchsiger ruhiger Entfaltung, ohne ein anderes Wunder als das der ungeheuern Weltschöpfung, in welchem seine Wurzeln lagen. (II, 37)

The similarity of this comment to Darwin's original notion is striking, even though the idea of the Tree of Life goes back well before Darwin and a direct connection between the two would be impossible to prove:

As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds, and these, if vigorous, branch out and overtop on all sides many a feeblar branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever-branching and beautiful ramifications. 57

The tremendous intellectual impact of the theory of evolution soon resulted in attempts to apply analogous concepts of development to human traits and to social forms. Despite the fact, however, that evolutionism began to flourish in cultural anthropology, Storm remained pessimistic in his approach, unconvinced that the notion of social progress was a valid one. Some well-known words which we have already mentioned are included in the following excerpt from a

letter of 1870 to his son Ernst, in which he reveals his true convictions concerning humanity:

Was mich hauptsächlich beherrscht - und das verschlingt alles andere -, das ist der Ekel, einer Gesellschaft von Kreaturen anzugehören, die außer den übrigen ihnen von der Natur auferlegten Funktionen des Futtersuchens, der Fortpflanzung etc. auch die mit elementarischer Stumpfheit befolgt, sich von Zeit zu Zeit gegenseitig zu vertilgen. Das Bestehen der Welt beruht darauf, das alles sich gegenseitig frißt, oder vielmehr das Mächtigere immer das Schwächere; den Menschen als den Mächtigsten vermag keines zu fressen; also frißt er sich selbst, und zwar im Urzustande buchstäblich. Dies ist die eigentliche Ursache der Kriege, die anderen sog. Ursachen sind nur die Veranlassungen. Keine Zivilisation wird, ja darf das je überwinden. Aber niederdrückend ist der Gedanke; es ist so einer, über den man verrückt werden könnte. <sup>58</sup>

Storm here renders his own rather bleak interpretation of the negative ideas of suffering and destruction involved in evolution. But he is not without a glimmer of confidence at least in the potential of the individual human spirit to rise above what almost appears to be a law of nature, for he continues: "Ist der Gedanke richtig, so ist schon der Umstand, daß man ihn fassen konnte, doch wieder ein Beweis, daß wenigstens der einzelne sich über diesen Zustand erheben kann"<sup>59</sup>. Only a few years later, however, when Storm's conviction that man is essentially but a driven and helpless being has grown stronger, the spark of optimism expressed in his letter to Ernst seems to have disappeared:

Mir erscheint im Kriege, trotz alles Erhabenen, was dabei *gelegentlich* vorkommt, der Mensch, oder besser, die Menschheit in ihrer tiefsten Erniedrigung; denn er, oder sie, erscheint hier als das willenlose - trotz alledem willenlose - Werkzeug der Natur, die ohne Vernichtung nicht balancieren kann und deshalb ihre Kreaturen aneinanderhetzt. <sup>60</sup>

Both Storm's private correspondence and his narrative work contain numerous clear statements as well as more general underlying thoughts which almost certainly spring from his interest in Darwinism, even if he does not call it directly by name. The question of heredity in particular, and the related issue of "culpa patris" was a crucial one for him, and will be examined further in Chapter Four. At this point it is sufficient to have outlined the major similarities between Darwin's ideas and terminology and those of Storm, and thus to have indicated the likely, even if not fully attestable source of his thought in this regard.

### B.6 Schopenhauer

The other major figure in the world of nineteenth-century thought who requires some mention at this stage is Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). His relevance to the work of Storm is arguably no more than indirect, but the impact of his writings was significant in that they corresponded to the general mood of the times. The disappointments of 1848 had left the bourgeois world ripe for his rather bleak outlook, and people were ready to pay attention to a philosophy which emphasized the evil in the world and the vanity of life. As Ingrid Krauss writes: "der Pessimismus, der durch Schopenhauer seine Prägung und Begründung erhalten hatte, war bald zum Schlagwort der damaligen Zeit geworden"<sup>61</sup>.

Schopenhauer's philosophy was distinctive in its stress on irrational will as the foundation of the cosmos. The idea which he put forward in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819) constituted a reaction against the then dominant eighteenth-century or Enlightenment conceptions of the universe. For Schopenhauer, the universe was not rational. On the contrary, "Will" was for him the name of a non-rational force, a blind, striving power whose operations are without ultimate purpose or design. Portrayed in this way, nature in all its aspects takes on an endless, and in the last analysis meaningless, struggle for existence, in which all is stress, conflict and tension. Some resemblance to Darwin's theory can be recognised here, but with Schopenhauer the conclusions were wholly pessimistic. He saw no escape from a cruel, purposeless world except in aesthetic contemplation, or in the extinction of the will.

The fact that the name and the basic ideas of Schopenhauer were not unknown to Storm is demonstrated in at least one reference to him in his correspondence. It is perhaps worthy of note, however, that when Storm alludes to "Schoppenhauerschen Stimmungen"<sup>62</sup> in a letter of 1875 to Heyse, the incorrect spelling of the name would seem to indicate a lack of particularly close acquaintance with the philosopher's work. Presumably he read the "Epigramme"<sup>63</sup> taken from Schopenhauer's *Parerga und Paralipomena* which Emil Kuh enclosed in a letter to him of 1872, but it may be significant that on a later occasion Kuh sought to draw Storm's attention to the fact that there was a considerable difference between the genuine,

original philosophy of Schopenhauer and the popular, distorted jargon which a new wave of interest in his ideas had produced. Kuh's comment was: "Zu den Geistern, welche entscheidend auf mich gewirkt haben, gehört auch Schopenhauer; der wesentliche Schopenhauer, nicht der von der literarischen Mode der letzten zehn Jahre mißbrauchte und mißverstandene Schopenhauer"<sup>64</sup>. Implicit here is the suggestion that Storm too belonged to the large category of people who lacked a proper grasp of the essence of Schopenhauer's thought.

It is probably not unfair to claim that in general Storm was unfamiliar with the finer details of most philosophies<sup>65</sup>, including that of Schopenhauer, but nonetheless, having himself a penchant towards melancholy and even pessimism, it is possible that some of his own thoughts were inspired by and adapted from lines which he had perhaps read in a journal or newspaper article on Schopenhauer. One must be careful here to avoid undue speculation, and must hesitate to draw conclusions which are quite groundless and indeed unhelpful, but a few examples stand out particularly strongly and seem to merit some consideration. Schopenhauer, for instance, writes in his *Parerga und Paralipomena* the following:

Wie die Liebe zum Leben im Grunde nur Furcht vor dem Tode ist, so ist auch der Geselligkeitstrieb der Menschen im Grunde kein direkter, beruht nämlich nicht auf Liebe zur Gesellschaft, sondern auf Furcht vor der Einsamkeit, indem es nicht sowohl die holdselige Gegenwart der Andern ist, die gesucht, als vielmehr die Oede und Beklommenheit des Alleinseins, nebst der Monotonie des eigenen Bewusstseyns, die geflohen wird. <sup>66</sup>

This passage, in its emphasis on man's innate fear of loneliness and isolation, bears a striking resemblance to Storm's famous line, spoken by the uncle of the heroine Anna in the Novelle *Im Schloß*: "Liebe ist nichts als die Angst des sterblichen Menschen vor dem Alleinsein" (II, 35).

The title of Schopenhauer's major work, along with its memorable opening sentence, "Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung", made a great impact on the world of thought and was on the lips of many, whether they fully understood its meaning or not. One wonders whether this notion of "Vorstellung", of the manner in which man perceives the world and how reality manifests itself to him, is alluded to in a passage from Storm's *Der Amtschirurgus*:

Nur soviel ist gewiß: auch wir Gesunden sehen die Dinge nicht,

wie sie sind; uns selber unbewußt, webt unser Inneres eine Hülle um sie her, und erst in dieser Scheingestalt erträgt es unser Auge, sie zu sehen, unsere Hand, sie zu berühren. (IV, 386)

Also the idea of "blind will", the other central concept of Schopenhauer's work, is called to mind when one reads in the same tale Storm's depiction of the destiny of man in an indiscriminate and meaningless universe:

Hu! Wie kommen und gehen die Menschen! Immer ein neuer Schub, und wieder: Fertig! - Rastlos kehrt und kehrt der unsichtbare Besen und kann kein Ende finden. Woher kommt all das immer wieder, und wohin geht der grause Kehricht? (IV, 396)

Having drawn these parallels, however, it is important to remember that a direct influence of Schopenhauer on Storm cannot be proven, and, as one must concede, Storm's pessimism may well have been no more than his personal expression of the general feeling of "Weltschmerz" which pervaded nineteenth-century Europe. Reminiscent as this may be at times of Schopenhauer, it would be quite false to describe him as a true disciple of such a philosophy, for he never reached the same extreme conclusions as Schopenhauer did in his Brahman ideal of total self-detachment from the torment and misery of earthly life. Even when Storm truly plumbed the depths of despair, such as after the death of Constanze, he still refused to surrender to total hopelessness, and his affirmation of the beauty and value of life continued to bear him up and carry him on. The Novelle *Viola Tricolor*, a story which reflects his own experience to an extent, closes with the words:

'Laß uns das Nächste tun; das ist das Beste, was ein Mensch sich selbst und anderen lehren kann.'

'Und das wäre?' fragte sie.

'Leben, Ines; so schön und lange, wie wir es vermögen!' (II, 415)

All of the notable developments in the realms of thought and science which have been documented briefly in the foregoing pages are relevant to the present study in that they formed the distinctive backdrop to Storm's times. As we proceed in our examination of his philosophy of life and his conception and portrayal of tragedy, it will become apparent how the ideas which shaped the world in which he lived also inevitably influenced his own thinking. The names of Feuerbach and Darwin are the ones which spring most readily to mind when one considers the conclusions which Storm reached, especially in the matter of religious faith and the problem of heredity. But much can also be detected in more general terms in



his work of, on the one hand, the materialism, and on the other hand the pessimism which pervaded and characterised the nineteenth century. Having thus reviewed the climate of ideas in which Storm dwelt, we will now move on to examine more closely some aspects of the man himself.

## Section C: The Background of Personal Experience

### C.1 Childhood and Education

The years of Storm's boyhood and early youth were spent in the era of the Restoration, during the period of the Metternich system which he himself later described as "eine praktisch unpolitische Zeit" (IV, 524). He enjoyed a happy childhood, free from parental constraints, in which he mixed with the other children of the town, regardless of their social background. Not all of his time, however, was spent engaged in traditional childish pursuits. Even from an early age he was strongly attracted by the beauty of the marsh, the heath and the sea around him, as well as by the stately, eighteenth-century home of his maternal grandparents with all its reminders of a noble heritage and what for him seemed to be an idyllic past, conjured up in the many family portraits and the Rococo antiques. These were the things, rather than individual people, which made an early and lasting impression upon him:

Ich wüßte nicht, daß bis zu meinem achtzehnten Lebensjahre irgend ein Mensch . . . Einfluß auf mich geübt, dagegen habe ich durch Örtlichkeiten starke Eindrücke empfangen; durch die Heide, die damals noch zwischen Husum und einem Dorfe lag, wohin ich fast alle vierzehn Tage . . . ging, durch den einsamen Garten meiner Urgroßmutter, durch den mit alten Bildern bedeckten "Rittersaal" des Husumer Schlosses u.s.w., auch durch die Marsch, die sich dicht an die Stadt schließt, und das Meer, namentlich durch den bei der Ebbe so großartig öden Strand der Nordsee. 67

Much of his free time was also spent avidly listening to the folk-tales narrated by the local baker's daughter Magdalena Jürgens, commonly known as Lena Wies, who related stories in her native Low German, "in gedämpften Ton, mit einer andachtsvollen Feierlichkeit" (IV, 405). Not only was this a source of entertainment, but more importantly it was also the first spark of poetic inspiration to light up his young mind and set his own imagination to work. Furthermore, spared as he had been at home from the rigours of religious dogma, Lena Wies exercised a significant influence upon the boy in her adamant rejection of traditional Christianity. Her famous line "Hm, Herr Propst! Se kriegen mi nich!" (IV, 410) is echoed in the poem *Ein Sterbender* where Storm, having at last himself reached the same position, depicts the old man as writing: "Auch bleib' der Priester meinem Grabe fern" (I, 181). This woman therefore was

strongly instrumental in shaping both the religious and the early artistic development of the boy who sat spellbound at her feet, much more so than his own parents who had their attention filled by professional and household duties and by the material demands of a large family.

At nine years of age the young Storm began to attend the "Gelehrtenschule" in Husum, a school which, although catering for basic educational needs, enjoyed at best a rather mediocre reputation and fed its pupils "nur mit geistiger Hausmannskost" (IV, 396). With no more than around seventy pupils in all, its resources were very limited. Old-fashioned methods of mechanical repetition were used in the learning of languages and in religious education, and the overall style of teaching was narrow and uninspiring. As far as the great traditions of German literature were concerned, it offered a less than comprehensive cross-section. Apart from a few shorter poems, all that was explored of the celebrated legacy of Goethe was *Hermann und Dorothea*, and the whole sphere of developments in contemporary writing was disregarded. The importance of the study of one's national literature in general, as Storm later recalled, was highly underrated:

Leider muß ich bekennen, daß auch die deutsche Poesie als Luxusartikel betrachtet und lediglich dem Privatgeschmack anheimgegeben war; und dieser Geschmack war äußerst unerheblich. Unseren Schiller kannten wir wohl; aber Uhland hielt ich noch als Primaner für einen mittelalterlichen Minnesänger, und von den Romantikern hatte ich noch nichts gesehen als einmal Tiecks Porträt auf dem Umschlage eines Schreibbuches. (IV, 391)

Given the apparent lack of ability on the part of the teachers to inculcate a love of learning or to teach the rich rewards of conscientious application to a task, it is hardly surprising that the young Storm's achievements there were unexceptional. Indeed, looking back he freely admitted, "Gelernt habe ich niemals etwas Ordentliches; und auch das Arbeiten an sich habe ich erst als Poet gelernt"<sup>68</sup>. Thus it is easy to understand why his parents, aware of the limitations of the Gelehrtenschule and of what a small town like Husum had to offer, decided in 1835 when Storm was eighteen to transfer him to Lübeck to complete his secondary education at the much more prestigious Katharineum.

Lübeck provided for Storm his first taste of a hitherto unknown

world of commerce, culture and learning in an impressive architectural and historical setting. Although his stay there was brief - lasting only one and a half years - this period can arguably be seen as the most influential of all as far as the future direction of his talents was concerned. For it was there that his first real encounter with cultivated and scholarly people took place, and that the value and attractiveness of good literature were revealed to him. The Katharineum was a well-run and respected institution, esteemed for its humanistic educational approach, and including a number of eminent teachers in its staff. Thomas Mann, another famous pupil of this academy, described it as a place where "die klassische Bildung als heiterer Selbstzweck gegolten hatte, den man mit Ruhe, Muße und fröhlichem Idealismus verfolgte"<sup>69</sup>. Even if the instruction which it imparted was of little practical relevance to later life, it afforded Storm a basic training which far exceeded the scope of the Gelehrtenschule and, much more importantly, gave him the opportunity to make helpful and timely friendships with individuals from whom he was to learn a great deal.

Storm's most influential friendship during his time in Lübeck was the one with Ferdinand Röse, a young man with great independence of mind and, for the impressionable Storm, with an aura of the fascinating and unconventional about him. Although he was only two years older than Storm, Röse was by far the more mature, and quickly assumed the role of a powerful tutor and stimulator. Very much a bohemian, late-Romantic character, he was possessed of considerable acuteness in the matter of literary judgement, and had an instinct for identifying the best in new and exciting trends. As well as introducing Storm into the literary salons of the town, he acquainted him with Goethe's *Faust* and unlocked the door of a whole new realm for him with the lyric poetry of Uhland, Eichendorff and Heine. Storm recalled in particular the memorable evening when Röse had first read to him from Heine's *Buch der Lieder*: "Ich war wie verzaubert von diesen stimmungsvollen Liedern . . . da war mir, als seien die Tore einer neuen Welt vor mir aufgerissen worden" (IV, 528).

Despite Röse's repeatedly harsh, albeit justified indictment of Storm in the words "Du bist geistig tot"<sup>70</sup>, he nonetheless recognised his young friend's literary potential, and succeeded well in steering

him away from more pedestrian inclinations and awakening in him a feel for that which was fresh and individual. Moved and inspired by the new poetry to which Röse had led him, together with the lyric of Mörike which he was exhilarated to discover for himself, Storm made his own first faltering attempts at expressing his feelings in verse, which in retrospect he viewed as having been:

wie ein Flügelprüfen ohne Selbständigkeit, nur hervorgegangen aus dem inneren Drange nach künstlerischem Formen und idealer Auffassung des Lebens, nicht aus dem unabweisbaren Drange, ein bestimmtes Inneres gestaltet auszuprägen.<sup>71</sup>

Imperfect though these initial achievements may have been, the important point was that his decisive encounter with true literary art had taken place, the fire inside him had been kindled, and development and maturity in his own work would gradually follow in the course of time. Moreover, the style and essence of much of the more skilful work which did ensue owed an enormous debt in general to the stimulating new vista which had been opened up to Storm during his time in Lübeck, and in particular to the strong influence of Röse with his predilection for the mixture of realism and late-Romantic sentimentality which was to become so popular towards mid-century in Germany.

Having finished at the Katharineum, Storm's next step was to enrol in the Faculty of Law at the University of Kiel since, as he wrote to Emil Kuh, revealing his lack of personal vocation: "Es ist das Studium, das man ohne besondere Neigung studieren kann, auch mein Vater war Jurist"<sup>72</sup>. The influence of his father may well have played some part here, and clearly at this early stage Storm did not consider his blossoming love of literature or his own endeavours to write poetry as momentous enough to merit the devotion of his interests to a different faculty. The following six years of study (1837-43) were surprisingly unremarkable as far as Storm's mental or artistic development were concerned, when compared with the previous period in Lübeck or the subsequent one in Husum when political issues increased in importance. Storm's first experience of university life at Kiel was very much a disappointment to him. The place was small and parochial in comparison to Lübeck, and he sought in vain for friends who embodied the "trauliche Heiterkeit" and "schöne, jugendliche Poesie des Lebens"<sup>73</sup> to which he had looked forward in student circles. Instead, he found himself in a community of two extremes, encountering either the

non-communicative nature of the highly studious and introverted, or else the arrogant and vacuous behaviour of the drinking and duelling fraternities.

Feeling isolated and unsettled, he therefore decided after a year to move to Berlin, where the company of his old friend Ferdinand Röse and other literary-minded acquaintances seemed to promise a more enjoyable lifestyle. Here there was no lack of cultural entertainment in the form of plays and concerts, but access to the more intimate contact of the literary salons remained barred to him since he had not yet distinguished himself sufficiently: "Wie sehnsüchtig habe ich als Student nach den Häusern hinaufgesehen, wo Dichter und Künstler wohnten! Aber mir öffnete sich keins"<sup>74</sup>. After Storm's first semester in Berlin, Röse left to continue his studies elsewhere, and as his circle of friends gradually broke up, Storm became increasingly lonely and disillusioned.

It was only on his return to Kiel after a further two semesters that circumstances began to improve for the young Storm and that the disenchantment of his hitherto profitless experiences were eventually forgotten. In Kiel he met and joined the circle of the Mommsen brothers, finding in them at last the stimulus and meeting of interests which he had missed for so long. The two brothers Theodor and Tycho were both men of high academic ability, keen critical judgement and an enterprising spirit, and a close friendship soon developed between the three:

Wie reich war ich in Kiel! . . . ein beständiger, lebendiger Gedankenaustausch. Durch diesen Verkehr hatten sich so mannigfache Beziehungen uns aufgetan, daß dadurch ein merkwürdig schnelles, übereinstimmendes Auffassen und Beurteilen aller geistigen Erscheinungen, die wir in unsern Kreis zogen, entstand.<sup>75</sup>

Storm's relationship with Theodor Mommsen in particular was similar to the one he had earlier enjoyed with Röse in that Mommsen helped broaden his new friend's horizons, as well as fulfilling the helpful role of sharp-minded critic of Storm's early poetry. Several significant elements of Storm's world view can clearly be traced back to the forceful influence of Mommsen in these student years, namely his hatred of the nobility, his atheism and dislike of institutionalised religion, and his strong political views regarding the independence of Schleswig-Holstein. As well as this, on the literary side, Mommsen shared and strengthened Storm's interest in their national folk

heritage. Together they embarked upon the collection of local Schleswig-Holstein folk songs, legends and fairy tales, and in 1843, shortly after graduating from Kiel, Storm had his first poems published together with those of the Mommsen brothers in the *Liederbuch dreier Freunde*. Thus, having completed his formal education, he enjoyed his first measure of literary success and embarked upon a career in which creative writing was to play an increasingly important part.

### C.2 Love and Family Life

The striking comment taken from the Novelle *Im Schloß*, "Liebe ist nichts als die Angst des sterblichen Menschen vor dem Alleinsein" (II, 35), has become one of the most famous and often-quoted statements in all of Storm's work, not least because it expresses in a nutshell a central aspect both of his private world view and of reality as it is portrayed in his Novellen. Despite a genuine feeling in Storm for the beauty of life, this is always overshadowed by an awareness of man's hopeless situation and by the persistent fear of being unable to overcome the problem of loneliness. His sense of isolation and insignificance in a huge and impersonal universe where the implacable march of time is a deadly enemy can be perceived clearly in a letter to Constanze in 1846:

Ich fühle mich jetzt so recht als ein kleines Sandkörnlein der großen Welt; ich fühle es recht, wie alles verweht und vergeht und vergessen wird, oft schon über Nacht; da wird mir die tiefste Sehnsucht im Herzen wach, jetzt, jetzt in diesem Augenblick Dich ganz, ganz zu besitzen. <sup>76</sup>

Here Storm expresses his urgent need to allay the horrors of transitoriness, loneliness and impending death by clutching to the physical and spiritual love of a fellow human being. To Storm, loneliness is the most unbearable curse of man, and hence, as we recall, it is the severest form of self-inflicted punishment imaginable for Franz Jebe in the Novelle *Ein Bekenntnis*. "Eine totenstille Einsamkeit war auch hier um mich herum. Mich schauerte" (IV, 232), says Dr. Jebe after the death of his wife, and it is subsequently to a lifetime of such dreadful isolation that he condemns himself as his only valid penance.

Against such a background of constant fear and insecurity, the importance of love and family life is paramount. The soothing

therapy of intimacy was Storm's greatest buffer against the harshness of external reality, and although death and immortality remained permanent problems for him and he was beset by numerous trials, he felt he could cope with the hardest adversity and sacrifice all other happiness as long as he was supported by the unconditional love of his partner: "Ich kann alles entbehren, nur die Liebe muß ich in überströmendem Maße haben"<sup>77</sup>. Devotion to spouse and family virtually constituted a replacement religion for Storm, as is indicated not only in the pious expressions of ecstasy by which his letters to his fiancée are characterised<sup>78</sup>, but also at a time of much increased maturity when a similar sentiment is revealed in his description of Hauke Haien's attitude towards his child: "Und an der Wiege seines Kindes lag er abends und morgens auf den Knien, als sei dort die Stätte seines ewigen Heils" (IV, 335). One may surmise that Storm's private perspective bore considerable resemblance to this, for the idea of the family unit not only as the source of solace, but even of salvation and a degree of immortality is a frequently recurring theme in his work. Where Storm in his early Novellen portrays the idyll of stable and peaceful relationships, removed from the evil and distress of the outside world, the context is always that of the family. And where the family in his later works is threatened and destroyed by the invasion of these negative forces into what ought to be a sanctuary and a stronghold where their powers cannot reach, there the sense of tragedy is the greatest.

Storm's zealous desire for total trust and genuine intimacy within the family most probably sprang from the fact that these characteristics had been lacking in his own upbringing. As a boy his need for emotional warmth and physical closeness had not been met by his parents. His father was rather an austere and totally humourless man, dismissive of his son's artistic inclinations, and although he describes his mother in more favourable terms, it would appear that she had little time to devote to him individually. In later life he wrote to Emil Kuh:

Ein nahes Verhältnis fand während meiner Jugend zwischen mir und meinen Eltern nicht statt; ich entsinne mich nicht, daß ich derzeit jemals von ihnen umarmt oder gar geküßt worden.<sup>79</sup>

In his love for his cousin Constanze he therefore sought a relationship which would be so intimate and fulfilling as to be "divine". He expected a great deal from her, demanding her exclusive devotion, and forbidding her to share her confidences with



anyone else. His marriage was to be irreproachable and unique:

Keine Ehe, in die ich genauer hineingeguckt, genügt mir . . .  
Wir müssen es also ganz, ganz anders, viel ernstlicher, viel,  
inniger anfangen als alle Leute, von denen wir wissen. <sup>80</sup>

Similarly, Storm's ideal with regard to his children was that their relationship with him should be open and unconstrained. They were not to live under the constant fear of parental authority, but rather to trust him always to treat them fairly. He considered such an approach to the rearing of children to be far superior to older, inflexible methods, and felt it afforded rich rewards. He wrote in 1886 to Dorothea:

darum sind meine jetzt großen Söhne jetzt meine intimen  
Freunde, die mir ihr Herz offen hinlegen und denen ich dasselbe  
tue, während bei der gewöhnlichen Erziehung in dem Alter in der  
Regel eine innerliche Trennung zwischen Vater und Sohn  
einzutreten pflegt. <sup>81</sup>

One suspects, however, that Storm painted rather a rosy picture in this letter which failed to reflect the underlying tensions already beginning to manifest themselves within his family. Despite his conscientious endeavours to be a good father and build up a close relationship with his children, the older ones in particular fell far short of responding to his efforts as he would have wished, and as special problems with Hans began to set in, he was forced to recognise the ever-widening gulf between his ideals and reality. The poignancy of his grief and worry at the worsening situation is expressed in a letter to Hans of 1871 in the words:

Die Nahrungssorge ist nur ein ordinäres Leid; die Entfremdung  
von meinen Kindern ist es, die mich ganz zu Boden drückt . . .  
Ich bin krank an Leib und Seele, mein Kind; nimm den Kummer  
von mir, soviel Du kannst. <sup>82</sup>

These words truly are a cry from the heart of an anguished father, but when Storm wrote them he could scarcely have envisaged that another fifteen years of torment still lay ahead of him in which Hans would repeatedly ignore his father's heartbroken pleas and spurn his attempts to save him, before finally meeting his early death as a shattered and tragic victim of alcoholism. The devastating impact of Hans' fate upon his father can hardly be overemphasized, for through it Storm suffered not only the disappointment of a broken relationship and the loss of a talented son for whom he had cherished high hopes, but also a chilling realisation of the cruel and arbitrary workings of nature which had the power to attack and

destroy both the individual and with him the very source of man's strength and protection, namely the family unit. This underlined awareness of the vulnerability of the family and the hopelessness of man's position in the face of threatening hereditary propensities which his experiences with Hans generated in him began to find expression in later Novellen such as *Carsten Curator*, *John Riew* and *Der Herr Etatsrat*. In these stories the artistic portrayal of wretched and even grotesque family situations clearly exceeded his own private experience, but nonetheless the tales are based on and inspired by his personal insight into this kind of suffering, a fact which adds to their power and validity as depictions of tragic reality.

We have already considered the importance in Storm's eyes of absolute fidelity and mutual self-consecration within the marriage partnership, since these factors are essential not only for the well-being of the couple, but for that of the entire family unit. Sometimes, however, it is possible to fall in the very area where one believes oneself strongest, and Storm appears to have been a classic case in point. Critics vary noticeably in their assessment of his affair with Dorothea Jensen, and anything which is said can be based only on limited biographical evidence, but certainly it is clear that his relationship with her overstepped the bounds of appropriate behaviour according to his own rulebook. In 1866, a year after the death of Constanze, Storm admitted in a letter to Emil Kuh regarding Doris:

In meiner jungen Ehe fehlte eins, die Leidenschaft, meine und Constanzens Hände waren mehr aus dem stillen Gefühl der Sympathie ineinander liegen geblieben . . . Aber bei jenem Kinde . . . da war jene berauschende Atmosphäre, der ich nicht widerstehen konnte . . . Gewiß ist, daß ein Verhältnis der erschütterndsten Leidenschaft zwischen uns entstand, das mit seiner Hingebung, seinem Kampf und seinen Rückfällen jahrelang dauerte und viel Leid um sich verbreitete, Constanze und uns. <sup>83</sup>

Eventually, when the tension involved in the affair became too much for her to endure, Doris decided to leave Husum. As Storm reported, not without relief, "Die Entfernung kam mir zu Hülfe"<sup>84</sup>, and this, combined with the determination which sprang from his resolve not to harm Constanze any further, enabled him at length to overcome his adulterous passions and indeed to discover a new and deeper love for his wife. If one considers, however, that in Novellen such as *Draußen im Heidedorf* and *Ein Fest auf Haderslevhuus* the

catastrophe is motivated primarily by the fact that the hero cannot or does not control his sensual obsession with one who is not his marriage partner, then the significance of Storm's own brief taste of such a potentially disastrous situation seems clear. Storm managed to check his own behaviour before irreparable damage was done, but some of his Novellen would appear to be extensions of his experience in their harsh portrayal of the tragic consequences of uncontrolled passions and desires.

The blessings of love and family life, as we have seen, were Storm's highest aspiration and his only solace in a hostile and impersonal world. It is therefore an ironic and poignant reality that he, the family man in the best sense of the word, the man who sought in the virtues of family life both his refuge and his fulfilment, should reach the stage where he found himself constrained to portray what he sadly called "die Familie in der Zerstörung"<sup>85</sup>. *Der Herr Etatsrat*, to which this comment referred, depicts the inexorable destruction of a family by the horrific power of alcoholism, and is a harrowing tale of isolation, pain and death. It is at this point that the full extent of his development from the *Biedermeier* painter of gentle family idylls to the rigorous and unsparing realist of the later works emerges. As is borne out also in Novellen such as *Carsten Curator*, *Hans und Heinz Kirch* and *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*, the family, which before was the unassailable bastion of sympathetic and civilised values, in Storm's mature work loses its stability and its blemish-free appearance, and is exposed to threats from within and without which eventually lead to disaster.

### C.3 Politics and Society

Few people would disagree with the judgement of Thoman Mann who writes concerning Storm: "man findet in seinem Werk und Leben alle Ingredienzien humanistischer Überzeugung und Haltung"<sup>86</sup>. But as soon as one attempts to move beyond a general assertion of Storm's belief in the freedom, the dignity and the moral responsibility of man and to define his attitude to society and politics in more precise terms, the issue becomes more problematic. The interpretation of the western, conservative camp has been to regard him as no more than an uncommitted liberal humanist, while eastern European critics have been keen to identify in him, in theory if not in practice, something

of the radical social revolutionary. The truth perhaps lies somewhere in between. There is no doubt that he had a clearly democratic world view and was motivated by a keen social conscience, but it is equally the case that anything with anarchical implications was anathema to him.

Even in Storm's early years one can identify the distinct beginnings of an attitude to humanity which was sensitive and caring. He was aware of the glaring discrepancy between his desire for fulfilment and beauty in all things and the poignant reality of the poverty and distress which blighted the lives of some of his fellow citizens in Husum. In 1845 he wrote to his fiancée Constanze:

Ich habe heute ein paar schmerzliche [Augen] gesehen. Erinnerst Du noch die halbgewachsene Dirne, die immer Bürsten an den Türen feilbietet, als schäme sie sich, nur zu betteln. Ihr Gesicht wird immer schöner, es ist ein so über alles weicher, schmerzlicher Ausdruck darin. Großmutter selbst sagte heute, sie habe recht ein paar schmachtende Augen, es sei wohl nur Hunger und Elend, weshalb sie so schmachtend aussähe. Ich glaube, sie fühlt mit Schmerzen, wenn auch halb sich unbewußt, wie anmutig und beglückend sie sein würde, wenn sie nicht im Schmutz der Armut zugrunde gehen müßte. - Oder war das nur der Poet, der das fühlte? Und muß dieser Schmerz nicht notwendig unter solchen Verhältnissen in einer Mädchenseele liegen, wenn sie die Zartheit ihrer eigentümlichsten Natur fühlt und sich unabwendbar dem Mangel und der Rohheit preisgegeben fühlt? Denn an der wirklichen Armut haftet auch immer der moralische Schmutz, und alle Schönheit ist ihr verhaßt; das ist der große Fluch der Armut.

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From these sentiments it is clear that Storm did not live in a world apart, occupied merely with aesthetic concerns, but rather that his eyes were open to society as a whole, and that the ills which he observed there strengthened his longing for social justice.

In more specific terms, of course, the forties were the years which saw the hardening of Storm's political attitude with regard to the Schleswig-Holstein issue. Taking his stand firmly on the side of his homeland, he expressed his anti-Danish feelings not only in several patriotic poems, but also in articles which he contributed regularly during 1848 to Theodor Mommsen's *Schleswig-Holsteinische Zeitung*, reporting on the development of local revolutionary affairs. Storm's involvement on the political scene, however, stopped short of full participation in current events. As he wrote in a letter to Mörike, the poems *Gräber an der Küste* and *Im Herbste 1850* were written "als ein unmittelbarer Ausdruck des verletzten

Heimatgefühls"<sup>88</sup>, but he did not go as far as to join a political party or to volunteer his active support, as for example Gottfried Keller did in the struggle for the liberalisation of the Swiss government. Despite this, however, he felt strongly enough in 1849 to sign a petition demanding the deposition of the Danish king as Duke and the termination of the union with Denmark, and when this was unsuccessful and the Danes regained the exercise of power in the land, he had to face the consequences of his political involvement as his licence to practise law was withdrawn. His "exile" was self-imposed in that he was not officially banned from Schleswig-Holstein, but nonetheless he regarded himself as having no alternative to forsaking a state which he could not accept in political terms, and in which he therefore in all conscience could not continue to live<sup>89</sup>.

Yet these events, critical though they were at the time, had no repercussions upon Storm's narrative production except in the case of the political allegory *Ein Grünes Blatt*. Rather than addressing specifically political issues in his work, his attention was instead more often focused upon contemporary social ills which he found objectionable and restrictive to basic humanitarian values. The topics which feature most strongly in his later Novellen in particular, and which often play a major part in the motivation of the tragic end, are the evils of aristocratic privilege and class distinction, and the power and intolerance of the Church. Added to this were his strong dislike of sexual taboos, of colonialism, of corrupt and exploitative government, indeed of anything which smacked of what he termed as "Beschränktheit und Unsittlichkeit"<sup>90</sup>.

It was during Storm's time in Heiligenstadt that his critical attitude towards both the nobility and the Prussian state were intensified. In 1864 he expressed his opinion in strong terms when he wrote: "der Adel (wie die Kirche) ist das Gift in den Adern der Nation"<sup>91</sup>, having already described them a few years previously as "die zwei wesentlichen Hemmnisse einer durchgreifenden sittlichen Entwicklung unserer, so wie anderer Völker"<sup>92</sup>. After his return to Husum, he continued to display intense hostility towards the Prussian authorities there, feeling them to be coarse, philistine usurpers of power who deserved nothing but the hatred of the Schleswig-Holstein people because of their undemocratic hierarchies, arch-conservatism

and elitist superiority:

Die Rohheit dieser Leute ist unglaublich, und sie helfen wacker die Furche des Hasses vertiefen, die das Verfahren der preußischen Regierung in die Stirn fast jeden rechten Mannes hier gegraben hat. <sup>93</sup>

Comments such as this are severe indeed, but even if Storm's private statements in letters on social and political issues are not matched by the same outspokenness in his Novellen, it would nonetheless be wrong to infer from this that he did not wish to influence his readers in any way or that he wrote exclusively with aesthetic interests in mind. In 1868 he wrote to Hans:

Wussow kannst Du auf seine großmütige Rede bestellen, daß, wenn meine Poesie überhaupt einen Wert hat, auch die darin enthaltne Demokratie ihren Wert und ihre Wirksamkeit haben wird . . . Es wäre doch sehr merkwürdig, wenn durch mein "Im Schloß", das in der "Gartenlaube" von mehreren hunderttausend Menschen gelesen, und mit Begeisterung gelesen ist, . . . wenn dadurch nicht in vielen der Leser ein Nachdenken, eine Vorstellung, eine neue Einsicht oder ein schärferes Empfinden und Auffassen dieser Verhältnisse des Lebens bewirkt worden wäre . . .

Freilich ist unsere Wirkung nicht so rasch und so handgreiflich, als wenn eine Armee gesiegt hat; aber daß die Wirkung da ist, das empfinden doch in unsrer Zeit die Gewalthaber deutlich genug. <sup>94</sup>

These words constitute an unambiguous statement of Storm's intention to mould the opinions of his readers and enable them to gain a deeper insight into the facts of political and social reality.

The Novellen *Aquis submersus* and *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* are powerful examples of this tendency, for they are harsh in their implicit criticism of a rigid caste system where antiquated rules are sacrosanct and the barriers of class distinction seemingly insurmountable. It is the viciousness and intolerance of aristocratic family members who will go to any lengths to protect the interests of their lineage which represent a major component in the sum of factors responsible for the tragic outcome of these stories. Here Storm's writing is clearly polemical in tone, expressing in careful artistic guise his private abhorrence of the uncivilised behaviour epitomised by the nobility and his awareness of the potential for suffering and tragedy in the lives of those who seek to break free from its narrow code for the sake of a love relationship. The aristocracy is portrayed as a class committed to ruthless self-preservation, but ironically also as a class in decline, as the predator experiencing the slow death which it has long deserved.

Some of Storm's work was inevitably offensive to his aristocratic acquaintances, but he did not let such considerations deter him easily. His closer friends knew that his animosity towards the nobility was a general, political one, not directed against individuals as such, and this is borne out in his lively and genuine friendships with Alexander von Wussow in Heiligenstadt and Count Ludwig zu Reventlow in Husum, both men of intelligence and tolerance who did not allow differing political stances to mar their relationship. A greater problem was posed by the censorship of editors of family magazines who refused to accept contributions of a religious, political or "immoral" nature in order not to offend the largely conservative and orthodox readership; and the unauthorised change made by Ernst Keil, the editor of *Die Gartenlaube*, to the ending of *Im Schloß* was one which angered Storm greatly<sup>95</sup>. Even for this fairly progressive paper, the idea that the Baroness should be asked whether the middle-class tutor was the father of the child she was expecting, was one which went too far. Storm was well aware of the revolutionary implications of his work, but he was determined to express at least something of his ideas, even if it meant losing readers as a result:

Ich werde dadurch wohl meine bisherigen Leser aus der Junkerpartei . . . ein für allemal einbüßen, sowie alle, die nicht auf dem Standpunkt des reinsten Menschenthums stehen . . . Aber diese Arbeit bin ich selbst, mehr als irgend etwas, das ich sonst in Prosa schon geschrieben hätte. <sup>96</sup>

The drafts of both *Im Schloß* and *Veronika* (1861) in fact show self-censorship at work, for holding the post which he did in the Prussian legal system, he could not afford to run the risk of overstepping the mark and being dismissed. The Press Law of 1851 gave the government the power to control all media of printed expression, and its provisions were extended by the Press Edict of 1.6.1863. This was designed to check those who misused their freedom to "undermine every foundation of orderly government and of religion and morality as well", and decreed that a newspaper or periodical could be banned after two warnings because of a "general attitude" considered "dangerous to the public welfare"<sup>97</sup>. *Die Gartenlaube* was in fact banned in Prussia at the end of 1863, and in the same year disciplinary proceedings were brought against civil servants, including judges, who demonstrated hostility to the government. In May 1864, shortly after Storm's resignation from the Prussian judiciary, salary increases for judges became based on political conformity rather than seniority as a result of pressure from

Bismarck who declared that "the government must reward its friends and punish its enemies"<sup>98</sup>. Thus for Storm an awareness of the precariousness of his situation in such a political climate was in constant tension with his desire to express a democratic, ethical critique of what he called the "Bismarckschen Räuberrepublik"<sup>99</sup>, of a social structure based on aristocratic privilege and caste exclusiveness.

Although Storm's expression of his antipathies towards Prussia and his desire for a better, more democratic social order is highly individual and owes no direct debt to the political thought of any one particular person, a study of his correspondence reveals the influence of several quite well-known figures of his day. In a letter of 1870 to Ada Christen he indicates the impact made on him by Heine and Freiligrath<sup>100</sup>, both of them radical free-thinkers of a strong Socialist persuasion. He was also a close friend of Ludwig Pietsch, whose interests lay strongly in politics and in the various workers' movements, and while in Heiligenstadt he had become acquainted with the Social Democrat Ludwig Löwe, another champion of the workers with distinct political leanings towards the left. One may therefore assume that these men helped at least to some extent to shape Storm's opinions on politics and society, and that his highly developed social conscience owed a significant amount to their influence and inspiration.

The aim of the foregoing pages has been to outline the main aspects of Storm's attitude to politics and society and to indicate the important part which these ideas play in his portrayal of tragedy. In 1862 Storm closed a letter to his friend Ludwig Pietsch with the striking words: "Ihr treuer, am Rande des Proletariats mitwandelnder Theodor Storm"<sup>101</sup>. One may conclude that this is merely an ironic reference to the tightness of his financial situation during the Heiligenstadt period, but given the staunchness of the political statements made by him which we have already considered, it would scarcely be out of line to infer that this formula in fact constitutes a notable intimation of where his sympathies lay. The political aspect of Storm's writing, however, despite its significance, is always subordinate to the poetic, and his works can never be described as manifestos. His purpose was not to be overtly tendentious, but rather to depict the tragedy of the individual whose life is destroyed



by the powers of victimisation, class distinction and vicious intolerance. This often necessarily involved making an implicit political point, which he did unashamedly, but not as his primary goal.

#### Ć.4 Religion

A superficial reading of Storm's Novellen could easily render the impression that he was a religious man. His admiration for the Christian personality, the frequent use he makes of Bible quotations, his obvious respect for genuine faith, and the numerous references to "der Herrgott", "der Allgütige", "der Allmächtige", "der Allweise", "der ewige", "große", "gnädige", "heilige", "unerforschte", often "der liebe Gott"; all of these things would appear to indicate a man of considerable piety. Thus it comes as no small surprise when one first discovers that Storm in fact died as atheist, without even the semblance of a relationship to God and with no hope for the world to come. He had travelled far from the belief in God which he had cherished in his youth and especially during his courting days. This religious persuasion, unstable as it was at times and certainly self-interpreted, gradually and painfully gave way to a more rationalistic, agnostic approach, stripped of the solace of immortality. The story of his progressive development away from faith is not entirely uncomplicated, but it is of marked importance, particularly for an understanding both of his growing pessimism towards the end of his life and of his portrayal of tragedy.

Secondary literature on Storm has in the past been misleading in its stress on the writer's comment in later life that he had been spared the rigours of a religious upbringing and had benefited much from this:

Erzogen wurde wenig an mir . . . von Religion oder Christentum habe ich nie reden hören . . . So stehe ich dem sehr unbefangen gegenüber; ich habe durchaus keinen Glauben aus der Kindheit her. 102

Despite what Storm writes here to Emil Kuh, the fact was that he had been sent to confirmation classes like any other boy, and was confirmed on Palm Sunday 1833 at the age of fifteen. Therefore, although his parents did not seek to influence him in any way at home, by no means was he totally without a religious background. It must be remembered that this letter to Kuh was written as late as

1873, when he had moved far away from his childish faith and possibly wished to play down the private struggles of his religious development. In the poem entitled *An einem schönen Sommerabende* (I, 223), written at the age of sixteen, a clear statement is to be found of the poet's belief in a personal creator who, having created man out of nothing, grants him joy and endows him with eternal life. But this enthusiastic declaration of faith, if one may call it that, is a rare one, even in Storm's early writing, and can hardly be taken as representative, for elsewhere his conception of God appears in a much more nebulous form. His letters to his fiancée Constanze, although they abound with fervent references to the sanctity of their relationship and constantly underline the eternal perspective, express his image of God in idealistic and general terms which do not bear witness to any real, concrete conviction as far as personal piety in a conservative Christian sense is concerned.

These letters to Constanze nonetheless do furnish an insight into Storm's developing religious perceptions, and at least a suggestion is already discernible in them of the change in attitude which was to come. Storm's growing love for Constanze is seen to awaken in him deep questions of faith which demand enquiry and expression. The picture which the letters present is a somewhat confusing one, composed of a mixture of Romantic idealism and liberal Christianity, but still they reveal an honest mind searching after truth and lasting values. In Storm's contemplation of love he became increasingly aware of the threat posed by the finite nature of all facets of existence, of the fact that beauty is conditioned by transitoriness, and life ultimately by death. In a letter written later to a friend he communicated again this sad realisation, "daß uns gerade im Augenblick und auf dem Gipfel des vollsten Lebensgenusses das Gefühl des unvermeidlichen Endes mit ungeheuerstem Schmerz anfällt"<sup>103</sup>. This consciousness of the impermanence of all things for the young Storm could be endured only by clinging desperately to a belief in a timeless state of being which would outlast the final ravagement of death, and this conviction was one to which he often testified in his letters to Constanze.

Even at a relatively early stage in his development, however, it gradually became clear that Storm's certainty of the hereafter was

weakening as a result of his own and indeed his century's increasing alienation from Christian teaching, and it is noticeable that the more he consciously distanced himself from Christianity, the more his cherished belief in immortality threatened to disintegrate entirely. The years of Storm's self-imposed exile from Husum, and especially the period of his stay in the Catholic town of Heiligenstadt, were of major significance for the moulding of his ideas. Here Storm directly encountered for the first time what Stuckert calls the "geistige Vergewaltigung"<sup>104</sup> of the Catholic Church, the enormous power which it had over the people and the unquestioned authority in all matters of faith which it enjoyed, and this incensed him greatly. While still engaged, he had already reacted strongly against the official Church ceremony of marriage, describing it as "eine Schaustellung des Innerlichen . . . , eine Profanation der Liebe, ein letzter Barbarismus der modernen Zeit"<sup>105</sup>, and now in Heiligenstadt we witness in the Novelle *Veronika* the working out of his indignation at what he has seen at first hand. In this work he registers a similar, even if less harshly expressed, protest against the Church's intrusion into the private sphere of marriage, on this occasion with regard to Confession.

A further important influence in Heiligenstadt on Storm's attitude to religion was effected by his friendship with the Landrat Alexander von Wussow. The two were drawn together by mutual intellectual and artistic interests, and von Wussow's inquiring mind, which had already led him to think more deeply than Storm on certain issues, soon inspired his friend to examine his presuppositions and seemingly to consider the ideas being propagated in the contemporary philosophical climate of materialism. Storm described von Wussow as "ein fürchterlicher Grübler"<sup>106</sup>, and the long discussions which they had together on religious matters clearly had a lasting impact upon him with profound implications both for his artistic work and his ultimate attitude to life and death.

The Novelle *Veronika* offers an interesting example of Storm's growing familiarity with the ideas on Christianity being discussed in Europe at the time, primarily as a result of the controversial works *Das Leben Jesu* by Strauß and *Das Wesen des Christentums* by Feuerbach. So radical were the views presented in the first version of his description of Veronika's husband that he deleted a

considerable portion (indicated below in italics) in order to avoid reprisals:

Der Justizrat gehörte zu der immer größer werdenden Gemeinde, welche *schon jetzt die letzte Konsequenz des Protestantismus ziehend* in dem Auftreten des Christentums nicht sowohl ein Wunder, als vielmehr nur ein natürliches Ergebnis aus der geistigen Entwicklung der Menschheit zu erblicken vermag. *Sein scharfes Auge hatte überdies sehr wohl erkannt, daß die Meisten derer, welche Gott den Herrn zu fürchten meinen, im Grunde nichts mehr fürchten als die Wahrheit; seine eigne Natur aber war eine zu tiefe, um sich in diesen Dingen, wie so Viele, aus Bequemlichkeit, wenn nicht aus anderen Rücksichten in einer bewußten Unklarheit gehen zu lassen, welche seinen Anforderungen an sich selbst auf anderen Gebieten des geistigen Lebens widersprochen hätte.* Er selbst ging deshalb in keine Kirche, weder in eine katholische, noch in die, welcher er durch Geburt angehörte. <sup>107</sup>

This statement, which even in the abridged version presents Christ merely as a highly developed human being and declines the traditional Christian doctrine of incarnation, reveals Storm's increasingly humanistic attitude and indicates his own inclination to dismiss the supernatural aspects of Christianity. The same year of 1862 in which *Veronika* was written saw the publication of the Novelle *Im Schloß*, in which Storm drew significantly on recent developments in the spheres of natural science and philosophy. One cannot fail to recognise here the influence of Darwin and Feuerbach, and the work conveys Storm's opposition to traditional religion in the most forceful manner hitherto. His new insight into the naked reality of nature in all its cruelty led him to depict the tutoring of the young girl Anna as she is pointed away from a child's naive conception of an all-loving God and introduced to the vast idea of the evolutionary development of man. In spite of the criticism and protests of many people, Storm remained proud of this literary achievement, describing certain scenes in it as the "purest expression of his personality"<sup>108</sup>, and, as has already been mentioned, asserting of the work as a whole: "Diese Arbeit bin ich selbst, mehr als irgend etwas, das ich sonst in Prosa schon geschrieben hätte"<sup>109</sup>.

As Storm's convictions became more and more firm with regard to this rejection of conventional faith, he recognised the logical consequence as being the imperative to sacrifice what remained of his belief in immortality. After a long mental struggle, made all the more agonizing by Constanze's deteriorating health in the years 1862 and 1863 and by his deep distress at the thought of losing her, eventually in 1863 he composed the poem *Ein Sterbender*. Here he

gives clear and passionate expression to his adamant renunciation of all hopes of eternity, portraying man's state of nothingness after death as the "Bann des ew'gen Schweigens" (I, 181). Storm maintained this position throughout the rest of his life, but the difficulty for him of such a resolve can be witnessed continually in the poignant awareness of transience which still pervaded much of his writing. Profoundly shaken by the death of Constanze on 1865, he wrote a cycle of poems entitled *Tiefe Schatten* in which he conveys the pain and grief of one who is spiritually lost, who has felt obliged on rational grounds to give up his hope of life after death, and yet is comfortless without it. On 3 June 1865 he wrote to his friend Mörike, referring to the latter's belief in immortality:

Sie wissen ja, daß ich Ihren glücklichen Glauben nicht zu teilen vermag: Einsamkeit und das quälende Rätsel des Todes sind die beiden furchtbaren Dinge, mit denen ich jetzt den stillen unablässigen Kampf aufgenommen habe. <sup>110</sup>

With passing years Storm's personal stance became ever more deeply rooted in a hardened, though at the same time somewhat sorrowful atheism. On 2 February 1868 he wrote to his son Hans regarding Constanze: "Wie lange habe ich sie jetzt entbehrt und habe wohl keine Hoffnung, noch jemals etwas andres wieder mit ihr zu teilen als die allgemeine Vernichtung"<sup>111</sup>.

Despite the firmness of Storm's resolve to ban from his mind all thoughts of a possible hereafter, the full implication of an existence without the solace of religion continued to trouble him. One gains the impression from his correspondence that he was still hampered by the clinging weariness and inward strain of a conviction which was proving inadequate to his deeper needs. Moreover the suggestion that the path of atheistic humanism was not as easy to tread as some would suggest is borne out by the testimony of his housekeeper who observed him in his moments of private conflict:

"Wenn ich doch glauben könnte!" Die Worte habe ich oft von ihm gehört. Ich weiß es und sah es, wie er unter seiner Überzeugung litt. Als aber der erste Geistliche Husums zu ihm kam, ihm Trost zu spenden, stand Th. Storm ihm so kühl gegenüber, so verstandesüberlegen - der Priester würde es gewiß nicht geglaubt haben, daß der Mann da vor ihm eben noch so gekämpft. <sup>112</sup>

As is indicated by this report, Storm was not free from intellectual pride, and he made a valiant effort to regard life without God in a positive manner. He sought to embody the idea that conscientious striving after worthy moral values was not a command to Christians

exclusively, but should be the obvious goal of any rational humanist, and moreover that it could be achieved by personal strength of will, without reliance on the grace of God: "Ich habe auch ohne diesen Gottesglauben alles Schlechte in mir zu bekämpfen gesucht - Neid, Haß und Eifersucht, und mich bemüht, ein guter Mensch zu sein"<sup>113</sup>. Therefore despite his unwillingness to accept the supernatural aspects of Christianity, he still retained its ethical code as a right and important guide to conduct.

In considering the question of Storm's position regarding religion it is interesting to compare the comment which his friend and fellow Northerner Klaus Groth made in a letter to his fiancée on the issue of faith: "Du bist christlicher, in meiner Auffassung liegt etwas Heidnisches; erschrick aber nicht! Ich bin doch ein guter Christ!"<sup>114</sup>. These words are striking in their similarity to what one might have expected from the pen of Storm himself. Groth, while holding to the basic tenets of Christian morality, admits here also to the pagan influences on his mind, a tendency equally characteristic of Storm, whose "Christian" sympathies were mixed with an attraction towards what he described as the "rotwangigen Heidentum, das hier noch in uns allen spukt" (II, 296). The ineluctable lure which the world of pagan superstition and mysticism held for him is manifested not only in the *Märchen* and in Novellen such as *Eine Halligfahrt* and *Der Schimmelreiter*, but also in his personal reaction to the ancient folk customs in his land. In a letter to Heyse of 1883 he wrote:

Vorgestern abend (30. April) mit Dunkelwerden sah ich aus meinen Fenstern meilenweit hinaus und dann auch nach den anderen Seiten überall die Maifeuer brennen. Unbewußt diente das Volk seinen alten Göttern, mir war, als fühlte ich das Ende der elektrischen Kette in der Hand, die zu ihnen in die Tiefe führt.<sup>115</sup>

One of the most pertinent remarks ever made about Storm was that of his nephew Ernst Esmarch who described him as being "mit dem Kopf ein Heide, mit dem Herzen ein Christ"<sup>116</sup>. This short phrase defines most perceptively the dichotomy in Storm's religious outlook, encapsulating the duality of his inclination towards Christianity and paganism at the same time. It is quite wrong to label him a sceptic as has been done in the past<sup>117</sup>; on the contrary, as we have seen, he desperately wanted to believe, and suffered greatly from his inability to do so. But when he examined Christianity from a rational viewpoint, he felt its claims to knowledge

of the truth to be dubious and indeed fallacious. He writes in the poem *Ein Sterbender*:

Was ich gefehlt, des einen bin ich frei;  
Gefangen gab ich niemals die Vernunft,  
Auch um die lockendste Verheißung nicht. (I, 180)

Storm's freethinking tendencies obliged him to rank the power of science and reason above the authority of Christian dogma, but this left unsatisfied his deep longing for the eternal, and his attempts to invest the values of romantic and parental love with eternal significance made a disappointing substitute for genuine faith. His underlying attitude was above all a humanistic one: he believed firmly in the dignity and goodness of man, and, in the poem *Crucifixus*, denounced the cross as being a symbol not of Christian reconciliation, but of an intransigent Christian Church which through it perpetuated the reminder of hate and human atrocity. Ultimately, however, Storm's determination to live a life of beauty and fulfilment without reference to God did not solve his problems. His decision to remove God from his thinking, rather than making life simpler, served only to increase his pessimism in a world of transience and fear, deprived of lasting meaning. At the end he was buried, according to his wish, in silence: a Christian funeral would have been inappropriate for a man who had closed his days as an atheist and as one convinced of the finiteness of existence and the invincible reign of death.

#### C.5 The Effect of Storm's Career as a Judge

Little has been written of Storm's professional experiences as lawyer and judge<sup>118</sup>, except with regard to the various merits and frustrations of pursuing a literary and a legal career at once<sup>119</sup>. The significance, however, of a lifetime involvement with judicial cases ought not to be overlooked, for the insight into human behaviour and social pressures which this employment allowed him to glean was arguably a major influence on his realism and on his conception of tragedy. Even if it was without any great sense of vocation that the young Storm embarked on his study of Law, the picture which emerges of him as he matured is of one who developed in conscientious perseverance, combining a strict sense of duty with a genuine desire for justice and truth. Moreover, his ability to deal with the common man, which already manifested itself during his early days in Potsdam, along with his capacity to listen and show

discernment in the more complicated issues of right and wrong, increased greatly as he was called upon to handle every type of crime which one might expect to find in a small community of the nineteenth century. The variety of cases which constituted a typical day's work is described by Storm in a letter to Hans of 1865, and underlines the rife nature of criminal problems in Husum at the time:

Ich plätschre nur so in Kriminalsachen: zweifache Brandstiftung durch ein 13jähriges Mädchen, Schwindelei, Betrug, versuchter Giftmord, Moorbrände, Holzdiebstähle; dazu haben sie Brade in Schwabstedt fast tot geschlagen. Alles das muß ich ausfeigen. <sup>120</sup>

The picture which emerges from such a description of Storm's daily round is a very down-to-earth and practical one, and indicates the breadth of experience and skill in understanding the human psyche and in weighing up external factors which it must have demanded.

As a lawyer Storm was never guilty of a remote, ivory-tower mentality, careful to maintain a strict emotional distance from the distressing results of poverty and social injustice which he encountered. On the contrary, he was often moved by deep compassion, and his letters testify to the fact that the scenes he witnessed during the day's work frequently remained with him to disturb his thoughts later. Something of this sympathy for the lot of the poor may well have sprung from the insight gained through his own former experience while living in Potsdam where, despite the regular financial help of his parents, an element of the tension and demoralisation of having to live from hand to mouth had not been unknown to him:

Es ist unglaublich drückend, daß ich trotz alledem wie ein Arbeiter von der Hand in den Mund leben muß, und der letzte Groschen glücklichsten Falls am Tag vorher ausgegeben wird, wenn Tags darauf der neue anlangt. <sup>121</sup>

It was during Storm's period as judge at the district court in Heiligenstadt (1856-64), where he was regularly involved in cases which were tried by jury, that he began to move towards a deeper understanding of human suffering. He was struck by the frequency of suits in which individuals who were basically upright and even intelligent had been driven into conflict with the law merely as a result of confounding circumstances. The profound effect of this upon him is indicated by the accounts of the more moving cases which found their way into his correspondence. In 1862, for example, he wrote to his parents of the brutal murder of a girl, committed by



a young lad in an attempt to obtain the money which he knew she was carrying. The explanation for the crime lay in the simple fact that the boy's degenerate father had forced him to go in rags, and thus he was unable to attract a dancing partner like the other boys, who treated him with derision<sup>122</sup>.

Storm's increasing ability to recognise the harsh hand of circumstance driving people to extremes, and his sympathy for those with seemingly good potential who had sadly become the powerless victims of privation, is even more poignantly conveyed a year later in a letter of 10.10.1863 to Constanze. Here he writes concerning his reaction to a thief who had appeared before the court that day, already with many previous convictions:

Der Mann interessierte mich. Es war etwas in seiner kraftvollen Erscheinung, daß ich immer daran denken mußte, den haben die Verhältnisse auf diesen Platz gebracht. Etwas Sonnenschein zur rechten Zeit hätte vielleicht eine sehr edle Menschenpflanze zur Erscheinung gebracht. Meine gute Meinung von ihm hat sich jetzt bestätigt, denn ich höre soeben, daß er sich über Nacht im Gefängnis erhängt hat. Einer mehr zu den Vielen.<sup>123</sup>

Unusual about this report is the personal nature of Storm's response, the fact that he does not deal swiftly and mechanically with the man, viewing him merely as yet another hardened petty criminal and imposing the appropriate penalty without further thought. Instead he graciously identifies in the offender the "sehr edle Menschenpflanze" which, but for his unfortunate lot in life, he might have been, and he is painfully reminded again that this young man is but one of many in a similar situation. The account points forward to what is to be the theme of the Novelle *Ein Doppelgänger* some twenty-three years later: the powers of a hostile environment which turn a man of basically "noble" nature into a thief and an outcast, and eventually destroy him.

Storm must have been torn by an inner conflict at times, obliged in his professional capacity to pass judgement on those who were for whatever reason guilty of breaking the law of the land, and yet at the same time filled with human pity for those weak and oppressed individuals who were offenders, as he saw it, almost out of necessity. Besides this, what provoked a real feeling of abhorrence in him was the blood-thirstiness and merciless gloating of society when it saw "justice" done, while blind to what was perhaps its own share in the guilt. Storm once wrote of the crowd accompanying a murderer on

his way to the gallows in Heiligenstadt: "das Volk, die Bestie, war auf den Beinen; es war ordentlich wie Blutgeruch in der Luft; ich bekam plötzlich ein Gefühl wie allein in einer Menagerie"<sup>124</sup>. A similar feeling of personal aversion is evoked in the witch-burning scene in *Aquis submersus*, where the narrator's horror of the unrestrained mob instinct is clearly conveyed.

These things notwithstanding, it would be wrong to create the impression that Storm was over-lenient as a judge, or that he allowed his subjective reactions to impede the course of justice. Rather, he regarded it as imperative that the law be upheld and that criminals receive the punishment due to them. His unwavering attitude in this respect is attested in the case which he reports to his father in 1862 of a twenty-six year old defendant who had attempted to kill her illegitimate child by poisoning, but had stopped before it was too late. The jury wanted to recommend that she be pardoned, rather than have her face a two-year jail sentence for her actions, but Storm expresses in his letter his uncertainty as to whether he should agree with this, since in his opinion the punishment was not unduly harsh for such a serious misdeed<sup>125</sup>.

The old and highly respected position of "Landvogt" which Storm gained on his return to Husum in 1864 was one which further increased his contact with all the strata of society. Although he welcomed the greater independence which the new placement afforded him, he did not fall into the trap of allowing the prestige of the job to dull his empathy with the plight of the accused or to cushion him into an attitude of superior aloofness. If anything, indeed, the reverse is true, as can be seen from his comments to Pietsch in the same year as he takes up office:

Mein Amt gibt mir eine sehr selbständige und angesehene Stellung und ist mir in der ganzen Tätigkeit, die ich zu entwickeln habe, sehr lieb. Ich komme als Obervormund, Polizeimeister, Kriminal- und Zivilrichter viel mehr in rein menschliche Berührung, als dies in meiner früheren Stellung der Fall war. <sup>126</sup>

Da ich Polizeimeister, Inquirent und Richter in einer Person bin, so ist dies Geschäft insofern ein übles, als ich die Sachen nie aus dem Kopf loswerde, denn so wie ich nicht arbeite, ruht die ganze Geschichte, und die Inhaftierten sitzen daher immer auf meiner, wenigstens moralischen Verantwortlichkeit. Hoffentlich wird man indes auch dies gewohnt. <sup>127</sup>

Thus it is clear that every case was to Storm an individual one with its own unique character, and he regarded it as his moral

responsibility to see that all were treated with due consideration and fairness.

Some of the people whom Storm encountered, even if only briefly, as part of his daily work, imprinted themselves deeply on his memory because of the strange or tragic fate which was theirs. These lasting impressions of human character in distress or under compulsion, and of the nature of society with all its foibles, doubtless influenced his view of the world. The poetic working out of this is often seen in general terms in his literary production, although occasionally even a specific incident resurfaces as the basic idea for a Novelle, as is the case in *Draußen im Heidedorf* (1871) or in *Waldwinkel* (1874). The later Novellen in particular reveal a significant insight into the problematic issues of right and wrong, guilt and innocence, with all the potential for tragedy which they encompass. Moreover, he also recognises the limitations of any legal system in reality to absolve the individual from guilt. Thus Dr. Jebe in *Ein Bekenntnis* does not hand himself over to the authorities, for he does not regard punishment by law to be an adequate atonement: "Weder Richter noch Priester können mich erlösen; mein war die Tat, und ich allein habe die Verantwortlichkeit dafür; soll eine Sühne sein, so muß ich sie selber finden" (IV, 237). Storm clearly believed in the established process of justice, and it was his job to carry it through, but at the same time he was aware of the many grey areas for which it is inadequate, the deeper causes which it cannot recognise, and the guilt which it never can truly pardon.

Therefore despite the difficulties which Storm as a conscientious professional experienced in looking after the interests of two demanding careers at once, it would seem clear that the combination also offered rich rewards. He never seriously considered giving up his legal career in order to devote himself entirely to writing, for he always envisaged a certain danger in doing so, as can be perceived in a letter he wrote to Seidel in 1883:

Nur eines . . . hat mich erschreckt: daß sie die gut bürgerliche Arbeit, in der bereits Anerkanntes von Ihnen geleistet worden ist, mit einem Literatenleben vertauscht haben . . . Sollten Sie es nicht einmal bereuen, mit Ihrem Berufe so ganz gebrochen zu haben? 128

Apart from the fact that Storm's legal work provided him with variety and balance, it also continually furnished insights into human

nature and devastating situations which not only were invaluable for a convincing portrayal of tragedy, but indeed significantly moulded his outlook on the world.

The aim of this final section has been to consider certain aspects of the development in Storm's philosophy of life with a view to placing in context the ideas which appear as recurring themes in his work. It would far exceed the scope of the present study to undertake a detailed examination of all the matters which were important to him or all the individuals who helped mould his opinions, and besides, this already has been covered at length by other commentators. Rather it has been our purpose to identify those elements of Storm's world view which are relevant and indeed basic to his conception and portrayal of the tragic potential in human existence. As will become clear, the issues which lie at the heart of his tragic Novellen are but variations and expansions of the same ones with which he was intensely concerned in his private world. His agony at the devastating sight of his own child being destroyed by a power over which he had no control, the inner desolation resulting from his failure to find the God who is all-loving and eternal, his compassion for the plight of the unfortunate and the victimised, his anger towards those who perpetuate the evils of class distinction and intolerance; these were among the most important subjects of his private thought, as well as being the chief factors which motivate the catastrophes in his tragic Novellen. Having thus sketched the basic outline of our theme, in the next chapter we will proceed to examine Storm's view of the Novelle as a suitable medium for the portrayal of tragedy, and to consider his theoretical pronouncements on the central issue of tragic guilt.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CONCEPTUAL BASIS

#### Section A: Novelle and Tragedy

Having in the previous chapter considered a number of important aspects of Storm's thought and experience which disposed him towards a tragic view of the world, we now move on to examine the aesthetic convictions underlying his portrayal of tragedy. Storm was an undisputed master of the Novelle of Poetic Realism, and was zealous to demonstrate by his own literary efforts that the Novelle had finally come of age, ranking alongside the drama in its ability to create a genuinely tragic effect. "Die heutige Novelle ist die Schwester des Dramas und die strengste Form der Prosadichtung"<sup>1</sup>, he announced with conviction, and in an age when Germany's fame rested more on its achievements in science, music and philosophy than in literature, the claim which he made here for the Realist Novelle was a large one. It is therefore pertinent at the outset to explore this idea of the "Novelle as a substitute for tragedy", as E.K. Bennett phrases it<sup>2</sup>, for it constitutes a fundamental aspect of Storm's art and one which he was at pains to emphasize. It is not the purpose of this short section to attempt to trace the development of the theory of the Novelle in Germany from its beginnings to the time of Storm; that would be too vast an undertaking, and has besides been the subject of many academic investigations in the past<sup>3</sup>. Rather it is our concern to focus on the relationship between the drama and the Novelle in the nineteenth century and briefly to review the opinions expressed by Storm and other leading figures on the controversial question as to whether the Novelle may properly be regarded as a suitable medium for the portrayal of tragedy. Despite Klein's argument that such a discussion is "eine bloße Spielerei mit interessanten Vergleichen"<sup>4</sup>, it was nonetheless an important issue of Storm's day, and therefore cannot be ignored.

A major problem from which the nineteenth-century Realist Novelle suffered was its lack of prestige as compared with the great achievements of the drama throughout the ages. Although the mid-century period was one of marked recession as far as the

composition of drama was concerned, still no other literary genre was equally celebrated. Hegel formulated the aesthetic sentiment of the times when he wrote: "Das Drama muß, weil es seinem Inhalte wie seiner Form nach sich zur vollendetesten Totalität ausbildet, als die höchste Stufe der Poesie und der Kunst überhaupt angesehen werden"<sup>5</sup>. The tragic drama was traditionally the most exalted of the forms, for it carried with it associations of classical style and ideas which since the revival of interest in Aristotle's *Poetics* in the Renaissance had commanded the greatest esteem<sup>6</sup>. By portraying the ineluctable lot of individual yet representative characters, Greek tragedy homed in on ultimate and universal questions regarding the inescapable facts of suffering and death, the loneliness of man in the face of mysterious and destructive forces in his own nature and outside, indeed regarding the whole issue of Fate, Necessity and the character of the gods. These same age-old themes were modified and further explored by succeeding generations, most notably by Shakespeare and the neo-classicists and to an extent also by the writers of middle-class tragedy. While the original Hellenic conception of tragedy certainly underwent changes, admiration for the tragic form was upheld. This therefore was the impediment encountered by Storm and other narrative writers such as Keller, Ludwig, Droste-Hülshoff and Meyer with their preference for the *Novelle* genre and their desire at the same time to portray tragic themes: the *Novelle* was not associated with tragedy, and thus was faced with the challenge of proving itself equal to a task which formerly had lain almost exclusively within the domain of the drama.

While highlighting the flowering of the *Novelle*, it would be false to imply that during this mid-century period in Germany the tragic drama was consigned to total oblivion, for the substantial achievement of Friedrich Hebbel must not be overlooked. But with this one notable exception, it is generally true to say that the political disillusionment which set in after 1848 engendered an attitude to life which lacked the drive and the heroic spirit favourable to the production of tragic drama<sup>7</sup>. Martini in his comprehensive introduction to the period lists a number of mid-century characteristics which were inimical to the dramatic form:

Die Subjektivierung der Formensprache, die Neigung zum Erzählerischen in der Weltaufnahme, die Psychologisierung und

Relativierung des Sittlichen, der Verlust an metaphysischem Bewußtsein, das Kausaldenken in der Auffassung der Lebensvorgänge - dies alles geriet zur Form des Dramas in Widerspruch. Nicht zuletzt entfremdete sich der liberale Entwicklungs- und Fortschrittsglaube dem Tragischen.<sup>8</sup>

These points are supported by the recordings of prominent literary commentators of the day. As Robert Prutz, for example, wrote in 1854:

woher denn sollten wir die Kraft, woher den Muth nehmen zu einer Dichtungsart, deren ganzes Wesen die Handlung ist, die Handlung, die sich durch leibhafte, lebendige Gestalten verkörpert und vollzieht? Nein: wir in unseren jetzigen Zuständen werden allenfalls Lyriker erzeugen, die unsern Schmerz und unsere Sehnsucht, unsern Zorn und unsern Groll in die Welt hineinsingen; . . . wir werden vor Allem in der episodischen Form des Romans ein bequemes Gefäß finden für den so vielfach auseinandergehenden, sich so vielfach durchkreuzenden Inhalt unserer Zeit - aber auf das Drama müssen wir einstweilen verzichten.<sup>9</sup>

The contemporary desire for greater intimacy and individualisation, together with a reduced inclination towards the emotional extremes often associated with the theatre, manifested itself in a marked preference for literary periodicals and for books available from lending libraries. Prose fiction came to be regarded as more capable than the drama, "das Leben, wie es ist, in seinen feinsten Nuancen aufzufassen, die tieflegendsten, zartesten Züge zu ergründen"<sup>10</sup>. Besides the question of public taste, however, the other major factor which even before 1848 had already been eroding the popularity and success of the drama was that of censorship. Following the Karlsbader Beschlüsse of 1819, the political content of plays was carefully monitored, and writers and observers had often to defer in anger and dismay to the intervening power of the authorities<sup>11</sup>. Theodor Mundt appropriately summed up the prevailing situation in 1834 thus:

Draußen vor dem Schauspielhause ist auch Gensdarmerie und Polizei aufgestellt, und behüten das Drama. Die Novelle steht sich mit der Polizei besser, und sie flüchtet sich auf die Stube, wo es keine Gensdarmerie gibt. In seiner Stube ist der Deutsche auch ein ganz anderer Mensch, da kann man mit ihm reden. Hier sitzt er still und läßt sich gern für Alles begeistern . . . So fasse ich die Novelle als deutsches Haustier auf, und als solches ist sie mir jetzt die berufenste Kunstform, das Höchste darzustellen.<sup>12</sup>

Similarities between the Novelle and the drama were noted as early as the beginning of the Romantic period<sup>13</sup>, and thus it comes

as little surprise that the idea of using the *Novelle* as a suitable and more flexible medium for the portrayal of tragedy emerged. As Heinrich Laube declared in 1833: "Man hat meisthin keine Form für vollkommener gehalten als die Tragödie, und es kann die *Novelle* alle innere Gesetze der Tragödie in sich aufnehmen, und sie kann, im Äußeren weniger beengt, sich viel fesselloser bewegen"<sup>14</sup>. The two German writers who perhaps most readily spring to mind in connection with the theory and practice of the *Novelle* are Ludwig Tieck and Paul Heyse. It is interesting that in their desire to raise the *Novelle* genre to a distinguished and independent position in literature, not less exalted than that of the drama or the novel, they each drew attention to a certain relationship between the *Novelle* and tragedy. Tieck viewed the *Novelle* as ideally suited to explore timeless issues regarding man's struggle with fate which previously had been the monopoly of classical drama, to portray "jenen Zwiespalt des Lebens, der schon die frühesten Dichter und die griechische tragische Bühne in ihrem Beginn begeisterte"<sup>15</sup>. In the same passage he proceeded to develop this idea, suggesting the potential of the *Novelle* over and above that of the drama:

Strebt die Tragödie durch Mitleid, Furcht, Leidenschaft und Begeistrung uns in himmlischer Trunkenheit auf den Gipfel des Olymp zu heben, um von klarer Höhe das Treiben der Menschen und den Irrgang ihres Schicksals mit erhabenem Mitleid zu sehn und zu verstehn; . . . so kann die *Novelle* zuweilen auf ihrem Standpunkt die Widersprüche des Lebens lösen, die Launen des Schicksals erklären, den Wahnsinn der Leidenschaft verspotten, und manche Räthsel des Herzens, der Menschenthorheit in ihre künstlichen Gewebe hinein bilden . . . Darum ist es dieser Form der *Novelle* auch vergönnt, über das gesetzliche Maas hinweg zu schreiten. <sup>16</sup>

When one turns from this striking and eloquent eulogy of the power and scope of the *Novelle* to the introduction to Heyse's *Deutscher Novellenschatz* (1871), it is perhaps with some consternation at first that one comes upon his rather apologetic description of the *Novelle* as "diese bescheidenste dichterische Form"<sup>17</sup>. On reading further, however, one finds that such a definition may be attributed to editorial modesty, rather than being taken as an expression of his genuine conviction. This is borne out by his subsequent assertion, similar to Tieck's, that often the *Novelle* can in fact offer a fuller consideration of the psychological details of individual and unusual cases than the drama, which demands a solution of the problem in accordance with generally accepted standards and has more limited



scope for subtlety of characterisation. Heyse affirmed that the Novelle had developed and perfected itself as a form

in welcher gerade die tiefsten und wichtigsten sittlichen Fragen zur Sprache kommen, weil in dieser bescheidenen dichterischen Gattung auch der Ausnahmefall, das höchst individuelle und allerpersönlichste Recht im Kampf der Pflichten, seine Geltung findet. Fälle, die sich durch den Eigensinn der Umstände und Charaktere und eine durchaus nicht allgemein gültige Lösung der dramatischen Handlung entziehen, . . . alles Einzige und Eigenartige . . . ist von der Novelle dichterisch zu verwerten.<sup>18</sup>

Heyse and Tieck therefore, together with the other literary critics whose opinions we have considered, were in no doubt as to the validity of the Novelle as a mature and powerful genre and as to its suitability in dealing with complex dramatic and tragic themes. But there have been those, especially in more recent times, who have thought differently. They have regarded the efforts of writers of Novellen to arouse specifically tragic emotion as being unsuccessful, due, as E.K. Bennett writes, "to the general tendency of an age whose spiritual atmosphere was alien to tragedy: bürgerlich as opposed to heroic"<sup>19</sup>. From the middle of the sixteenth century for over two hundred years the heroic type of tragedy had been the dominant form<sup>20</sup>. Aristotle had postulated in the *Poetics* that the purpose of tragedy should be to bring about a purging or relieving (*catharsis*) of the emotions of pity (*eleos*) and fear (*phobos*): pity is evoked at the spectacle of the undeserved misfortune and suffering of the tragic hero plunged into disaster as a result of some error based on ignorance (*hamartia*), and men are brought to fear for and suffer with the hero as they identify themselves with him and as the precariousness of the human condition is revealed<sup>21</sup>. In the eighteenth century, however, the tendency developed on the part of German tragic writers to emphasize less the element of fear in Aristotle's *catharsis* and, changing to a middle-class setting, to embrace instead the objective of inspiring in the audience or reader a reaction of understanding, pity and forgiveness. Lessing interpreted the fear referred to by Aristotle as being not "Schrecken" but "Furcht" in the sense of "das auf uns selbst bezogene Mitleid"<sup>22</sup>, and outlining the aims of the "bürgerliches Trauerspiel", he wrote: "nur diese Tränen des Mitleids, und der sich fühlenden Menschlichkeit, sind die Absicht des Trauerspiels, oder es kann gar keine haben"<sup>23</sup>. A century later it was a similar response

of sympathy alone which was generally evoked by the writers of "tragic" Novellen, and it is interesting to note that Storm too once mentions "das von Aristoteles geforderte Mitleid"<sup>24</sup>, without including the notion of fear from which it was originally inseparable<sup>25</sup>. Bennett makes the point that this nineteenth-century avoidance of conflict and emphasis on the suffering inherent in the fate of human beings inevitably evokes a sentimental response rather than the classical one of fear and pity, and thus he reaches the compromise of describing the Novelle as "the *sentimental substitute* for tragic drama during the period of Poetic Realism"<sup>26</sup>.

J.M. Ritchie is also unhappy with an unqualified acceptance of the Novelle as a medium for tragedy, but goes a radical step further than Bennett. In his article entitled "Drama and Melodrama in the Nineteenth Century Novelle" he defines the nature of melodrama as "suggesting sentimentality, theatricality, exaggerated pathos, avoidance of the truly tragic in favour of the contrived effect", and by drawing comparisons between various German melodramas and Novellen of the nineteenth century, "aims to demonstrate that in the past the traditional discussion has been pitched too high and that in part at least the Novelle often approaches more to the lower than to the higher genre"<sup>27</sup>. While Ritchie disclaims any intention to be destructive, his argument effectively counters what he seems to regard as little more than nineteenth-century hyperbole about the exalted capabilities of the Novelle.

An older critic to whom both Bennett and Ritchie make reference is Bernard Bruch, who in 1928 published a controversial essay entitled "Novelle und Tragödie. Zwei Kunstformen und Weltanschauungen"<sup>28</sup>. Here he described the nineteenth century as an age in which classical forms had fallen into serious decline and in which writers, being incapable of producing genuine tragedy, had developed in the Novelle a type of "bürgerliche Ersatzform eigentlicher Tragik"<sup>29</sup>, corresponding to the atmosphere of the times:

Sie ist eine künstlich emporgesteigerte Form, eine geistige Treibhaus-Kultur. Sie ist die sentimentalischste epische Form und nur auf diesem Wege ihre strengste und konzentrierteste, das epische Gegenstück der Tragödie geworden.<sup>30</sup>

These are damning words indeed, which seem to scorn and ruthlessly to undermine the best attempts of Storm and some of his

contemporaries to convey a genuinely tragic effect. On the other hand, of course, the accusation of sentimentality is not entirely unfounded, for it was the aim of the Poetic Realists, as the name suggests, to present a faithful depiction of reality, but to do so in a manner which underlined the positive aspects of life. They confined themselves mostly, though not exclusively, to a sheltered, private middle-class world, steering a course away from the harshest sides of human experience, and tending to prefer a measure of "Verklärung"<sup>31</sup> or poeticization of reality. To Fontane this was essential for good literature - "Es gibt kein Kunstwerk ohne Poesie"<sup>32</sup>, and he insisted on pointing out the fundamental mistake of equating Realism with the expression of all that was negative or ugly:

die Schönheit ist da, man muß nur ein Auge dafür haben oder es wenigstens nicht absichtlich verschließen. Der *echte* Realismus wird auch immer schönheitsvoll sein; denn das Schöne, Gott sei Dank, gehört dem Leben gerade so gut an wie das Häßliche.<sup>33</sup>

For Fontane therefore - and his influence upon and representation of the thought of this period is far from insignificant - even tragedy should in some way be softened so as to avoid a final effect of total wretchedness or hopelessness. Turgenev had criticised Storm for what he called "das leidliche Motivieren" and "die ganz vermaledeite Idealisation der Wahrheit"<sup>34</sup>, but the other side of the argument was neatly expressed by Fontane in his reaction after reading some of the stories of Turgenev: "Das Tragische ist schön und selbst das bloß Traurige will ich mir unter Umständen gefallen lassen; er gibt uns aber das Trostlose"<sup>35</sup>. The question of the appropriate amount of sentiment needed for poetic effect would therefore appear to be very much a matter of taste, and its presence, within limits, need not necessarily diminish the tragic effect. (One thinks, for example, of Storm's *Ein Doppelgänger* where a pitiless tale is placed within a poetic framework, but despite the tempering technique the impact of the tragedy still remains uppermost in the reader's mind.)

Bruch's argument, however, was not only directed against sentimentality, but also against the style of characterisation which he regarded as typical of the *Novelle*. It is true that most of the writers of Poetic Realism, in as far as they attempted the depiction of the tragic at all, conveyed little of the dynamism of heroic tragedy, and there is substance in Bruch's criticism of the passive characters

and the fated progress of events which dominated many Novellen of this period. But despite the weakness and resignation typical of the heroes of numerous Novellen, Storm's later work goes a considerable way towards refuting the implication that this was universally the case, and strongly resists Bruch's adamant assertion: "Der Novelle ist der Bereich des Tragischen grundsätzlich verschlossen"<sup>36</sup>.

It was Hermann Pongs<sup>37</sup> who in 1931 made the most significant reply to the criticisms of Bruch. He went firstly to great pains to reaffirm the freedom and responsibility of the tragic hero of the Novelle which Bruch had failed to see and vehemently denied. Bruch had, for example, written:

Und ebenso fehlt da [in der Novelle] jenes freie Bewußtsein, mit dem selbst der antike Held einer Schicksalstragödie handelt. Es gibt hier weder Bewußtsein noch Handeln, es gibt nur fatales Geschehen.<sup>38</sup>

Pongs' view was much less blinkered by the conviction that only the ancient form of tragedy was valid, and considering the fact that the Novelle was after all meant to be a vehicle of realism, he countered with the assertion that Bruch's conception of tragedy with its highly dynamic hero and compelling exaltation of spirit was "gegenüber der Wirklichkeit des Lebens eine stilisierende Vereinfachung, die nur einen bestimmten Bereich des großen Tragischen im Universum umfaßt"<sup>39</sup>. He pointed out moreover not only that, despite his fundamental belief in the responsibility of the central character at the end of the day, tragic situations in real life often develop "im Zwielicht des halbtriebhaft Unbewußten"<sup>40</sup>, but also that the progression of nineteenth-century thought on the motivation and portrayal of tragedy brought with it the demand for a new approach to the Novelle genre:

Diese neue und neugesesehenen Stoffe sind es, die sich durchsetzen, und weil sie für die Gemeinschaftsform des Dramas nicht taugen, die alte Form der Novelle verwandeln.<sup>41</sup>

This statement is reminiscent of that of Keller who wrote to Storm in 1881: "Das Werden der Novelle, oder was man so nennt, ist ja noch immer im Fluß"<sup>42</sup>. Clearly then even as late as the 1880s there was still an awareness of the further potential of the Novelle to extend its frontiers and chart new ground.

Storm, more than any other writer of the period, devoted the

prime of his literary career (from around 1871 onwards) to the perfection of the tragic *Novelle*, and his reflections and opinions on the theoretical side of his work are of major interest. His most systematic comments are found in a text which he wrote in 1881, occasioned by a newspaper insert by the novelist Georg Ebers, and originally intended as the preface to the eleventh volume of his *Gesammelte Schriften*. The fact that Storm had misunderstood Ebers' comment as a disparagement of the *Novelle* genre is of little consequence today, and ironically the somewhat angry response which the misapprehension provoked became the most significant statement left by Storm of his views on the relation of *Novelle* and tragedy. Storm saw two reasons why epic prose had taken over the originally exclusive task of drama: firstly, the numbers of the theatre-going public were becoming increasingly small, while nonetheless the need of men for this type of aesthetic experience remained, and secondly, recent dramas of any quality were seldom, or only for a very short time, making their way to the stage, whether it be as a result of the actors' shortcomings or because of the lack of ability on the part of the writers to make their work "playable". Therefore other people had taken control of the stage and Drama's loss had become Epic's gain. He argued that, particularly in the preceding decades, the *Novelle* had been shaped and developed to the extent that now it was capable of outstanding poetic achievement in the hands of the right artist. It was no longer, as it once was, "die kurzgehaltene Darstellung einer durch ihre Ungewöhnlichkeit fesselnden und einen überraschenden Wendepunkt darbietenden Begebenheit"<sup>43</sup>. Rather, as Storm pronounced:

die heutige *Novelle* ist die Schwester des Dramas und die strengste Form der Prosadichtung. Gleich dem Drama behandelt sie die tiefsten Probleme des Menschenlebens; gleich diesem verlangt sie zu ihrer Vollendung einen im Mittelpunkt stehenden Konflikt, von welchem aus das Ganze sich organisiert, und demzufolge die geschlossenste Form und die Ausschneidung alles unwesentlichen; sie duldet nicht nur, sie stellt auch die höchsten Forderungen der Kunst. <sup>44</sup>

This statement (1881) was written at a stage when the change in Storm's work was already clearly discernible, and conveys something of the maturity and conviction behind the new ideas he had been developing over the preceding few years. The challenge truly to do justice to his art and extend the capacity of his genre to deal with

"the deepest problems of human life" was one which inspired him as well as causing him to consider more deeply his own understanding and portrayal of tragedy. He recalled at one point in his diary a conversation with Heyse when they were talking about the early death of their mutual friend Kugler from "Rütli" days in Berlin:

ich sagte: "Es tut mir auch leid, daß er nicht die zweite Periode meiner Novellistik noch erlebte." "Ja," meinte Heyse lächelnd, "als du in Öl zu malen anfingst". 45

Although, to extend the metaphor, Storm had in the early part of his career won wide acclaim for the artistry of his melancholic "watercolours" with their moods of modest resignation and fatalism, it was when he developed the skill of working with the "oils" which gave expression to a new, deeper understanding of strong individuals at odds with and eventually destroyed by the powers of a hostile fate that his status as a tragic artist reached its peak.

## Section B: Storm's Conception of Tragedy

"Sein [Storms] Begriff des Tragischen war modern, nicht philologisch-antikisch"<sup>46</sup>, wrote Thomas Mann, and accordingly expressed in a single pithy statement what critics had been trying to say in a roundabout manner for years. It is this central question of the difference between Storm's "modern" approach and the traditionally more widely accepted classical concepts which must be addressed before one can proceed appropriately to use the term "tragic" at all with reference to Storm's later Novellen. This is not to imply that his conception of tragedy was totally alien from that which had gone before, but certain important distinctions, some of them attributable to the general development of nineteenth-century thought, need to be recognised in order to avoid the perpetuation of unhelpful terminology and assumptions which have dogged Storm-criticism in the past.

Ancient Greek tragedy presented a view of the universe, of man's destiny and his relation with his fellows, in which disaster was ever-threatening and ineluctable. The Greek plays faced squarely the facts of cruelty, failure, suffering and loss, they explored the area of chaos in the human heart and its possibility in the heavens, and gave a startlingly full account of the forces, within and without, that afflict man, that mystify him, and ultimately make for his destruction. Thus far a general comparison with the works of Storm seems legitimate enough, for these are the same basic themes which he treated with slightly shifting focus from one Novelle to another in the later period. A difference, however, lies in the way the tragic poets of antiquity portrayed at one and the same time not only all that beleaguers and oppresses man, but also a suggestion of that which edifies and even ennobles him. Tragedy, as the Greek plays defined it, stressed irretrievable loss, often signified by death, and no Greek hero embraced his destiny gladly; but in Aeschylus and Sophocles at least, if not in Euripides, suffering nonetheless was seen to lose its incoherence and meaninglessness, and became something more than merely a sign of the chaos or malignity of the world. Aeschylus and Sophocles showed that, for all its inevitable, dark and destructive side, suffering could lead under certain circumstances not only to growth in courage, loyalty or love, but also

to the discovery of a higher level of being in the inner life of the sufferer through the discovery of new moral resources of resolution and independence<sup>47</sup>. This idea was of course not the dominant one in later classic thought, since Euripides, the youngest of the three great tragedians, was much more pessimistic about the worth and meaning of man's activity in the world, and abandoned the concept of heroic sin for the reality of human frailty. But the older, Aeschylean approach to tragedy which portrayed the hero as sinning and then nullifying the act by an unconquerable will to nobility reappeared in a new, considerably strengthened form in the writings of Schiller and A.W. Schlegel during the Enlightenment and the early Romantic period. Schiller, whose classical plays contained suffering, sacrifice and regeneration as coequal parts of the hero's development, wrote in the opening sentences of *Über das Pathetische* (1793):

Darstellung des Leidens - als bloßen Leidens - ist niemals Zweck der Kunst, aber als Mittel zu ihrem Zweck ist sie derselben äußerst wichtig. Der letzte Zweck der Kunst ist die Darstellung des Übersinnlichen, und die tragische Kunst insbesondere bewerkstelligt dieses dadurch, daß sie uns die moralische Independenz von Naturgesetzen im Zustand des Affekts versinnlicht. <sup>48</sup>

Thus Schiller insisted that the tragedian's ultimate task was to show the hero's ability to overcome his suffering by an act of sublime repentance and regeneration and to die inwardly free. The hero's suffering would call forth the audience's pity, his sublimity their admiration.

This, however, is the most striking area in which Storm's conception of tragedy diverges from older ideas. His work displays little of the Enlightenment features of sublimity and regeneration, for to him the aspect of inevitable suffering alone was essential to tragedy. Indeed he seemed to draw a distinction in how tragedy should be portrayed, depending on whether the epic or dramatic genre was used. In 1881 he wrote to Erich Schmidt, "In Erwägung zu ziehen wäre es, ob nicht eine dramatische und eine epische Tragik zu unterscheiden wäre, gleichsam eine aktive und eine passive"<sup>49</sup>, and in a letter written less than three months before his death, he returned to this problem with a basically unchanged opinion: "Im übrigen gehört der Epik - cum grano salis - doch wohl mehr das Leiden, der Dramatik die Handlung an"<sup>50</sup>. These statements, however, are difficult to interpret, for Storm fails to explain the distinction in



any detail, and furthermore weakens his own argument by adding the qualifying parenthesis that his comment should be taken with a pinch of salt. Certainly the sympathetic critic is as reluctant to describe the heroes of Storm's later Novellen as "passive" as he is to claim that Storm's division between active and passive heroes is irrelevant to his own works. The former may be the more appropriate line of argument, but only if the word "passive" is understood in a relative sense to convey the difference between the hero of a drama which is characterised by tension and conflict and the hero of a narrative which proceeds in a much more relaxed fashion<sup>51</sup>. Having said that, a careful reading of Storm's diary entries and correspondence reveals something of the importance he attached during his later creative period to the idea that his characters should not be content to accept their fate passively. On the contrary he regarded one of the marks of the tragic hero to be his active resistance to the forces which threaten to engulf him: "wer im Kampf dagegen unterliegt, das ist der echt tragische Held"<sup>52</sup>. Even if he is pitting himself against irresistible powers and though the struggle is bound from the outset to be unavailing - Storm speaks elsewhere of "der vergebliche Kampf der Einzelnen gegen . . . die Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen . . . von dem er ein nicht ablösbarer Teil ist"<sup>53</sup> - nonetheless it is by the individual's resolution and courage in the conflict with his fate that he asserts his personality and that the tragic nature of his plight is intensified.

Potential tragedy for Storm does not lie in a single, perhaps even avoidable disastrous event, but rather it is an inescapable condition of existence. As has already been quoted, his purpose was to leave the reader "in einer herben Nachdenklichkeit über die Dinge des Lebens"<sup>54</sup>, and to demonstrate that tragedy can be part and parcel of everyday life, not merely reserved for a few select and high-born heroes of the stage. His portrayal of fate has none of the anthropomorphism of the ancient one; with Storm it becomes more hidden and sinister, and instead of being a transcendental power which intervenes arbitrarily in the natural course of things, it manifests itself rather as an unavoidable course of action that stems from the inner nature of man and the circumstances in which he is set. Thus the individual seems to be at the mercy of a cruel determinism in all that he does, no matter how he tries to act against

it. To some extent the ideas behind the tragedy of Naturalism<sup>55</sup> are anticipated by this suggestion in Storm's work that man can only endure and never really change his world. While rejecting the claim that he presents a wholly mechanical description of men as creatures of their environment, one can nevertheless identify in Storm a portrayal of the human condition which is similar to that of Naturalism in that the endurance of suffering is given no moral or religious valuation. The classical ideals of freedom and sublimity have faded, and the human act of will is seen as tiny and insignificant within the vast material process, natural or social, which at once determines and is indifferent to human destiny.

It is therefore by this view of ineluctable fate that Storm's attitude to tragic guilt was conditioned. In 1881 he wrote to Schmidt:

Es ist ein eigen Ding, die specielle Schuld des Helden für das Tragische zu verlangen . . . Ich muß nun auch nach meinem Sinn die Schuldfrage für das Tragische viel weiter fassen: der Held . . . fällt eigentlich nie durch eigne Schuld, sondern durch die *Schuld* oder *Unzulänglichkeit* des Menschthums, sei dies Feindliche in ihm selbst gelegen oder in einem außer ihm bestehenden Bruchteil der Menschheit, möge er gegen diese oder gegen sich selbst zu kämpfen haben und dadurch selbst oder mit seinem Glück zu Trümmern gehen. <sup>56</sup>

Unfortunately little is known about the precise content of the "geistige Hausmannskost" which was served up, much to Storm's disrelish, at the Gelehrtschule in Husum; but one may assume, since he writes, "unseren Schiller kannten wir wohl", that the emphasis in literature was placed on the eighteenth-century classics rather than on more modern works. It is unclear just how much he was taught or understood about the traditional elements and theories of tragedy at this relatively early age and how much he learned later, but plainly the "old-fashioned" approach to literature was one which he came to regard as being too narrow, and he felt compelled to depart from it. On 1 October 1880, in reaction to the criticism that the characters in his Novellen were destroyed without any fault or guilt on their own part, he replied:

Wenn das ein Einwand *gegen* mich sein soll, so beruht derselbe auf einer zu engen Auffassung des *Tragischen*. Der vergebliche Kampf gegen das, was durch die Schuld oder auch nur die Begrenzung, die Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen, der Menschheit, von der der (wie man sich ausdrückt) "Held" ein Theil ist, der sich nicht abzulösen vermag, diesem entgegensteht, und sein oder

seines eigentlichen Lebens dadurch herbeigeführte[r] Untergang scheint mir das Allertragischste. <sup>57</sup>

From these statements it would seem clear that Storm did not consider moral guilt to be necessary for tragic effect, and indeed 'this was neither a new nor an unacceptable notion. One need look no further than Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, with which Storm himself was acquainted<sup>58</sup>, for a well-known example of a tragedy motivated purely by the ironic blow of fate on guiltless individuals; but there were those, such as the person whose objection sparked off Storm's defence as quoted above<sup>59</sup>, who continued to look for some evidence of moral guilt as the hallmark of true tragedy. The world of literary criticism was, however, not entirely without a voice to speak out in Storm's defence. It is interesting that Alfred Biese, having probably received a very similar schooling in classical concepts to that of Storm, felt it incumbent upon himself to appeal for a more modern and open-minded approach:

Es spuken, selbst in den neuesten Schulausgaben, noch immer die engen und ängstlichen und polizeilich strengen Begriffe von sittlichem Verschulden und gerechter Strafe als Grundelemente des Tragischen . . . Erst allmählich beginnt der Gedanke in der heutigen Ästhetik und Poetik durchzudringen, daß das Kunstwerk durch sich selbst zu beurteilen, daß es eine Welt für sich ist, daß nach Schuld spüren im Leben wie in der Kunst "criminalpolizeilich" ist. <sup>60</sup>

The point being stressed here by Biese is surely one with which Storm would have agreed, had he lived a few years longer to see it in print. Indeed Biese's remarks are probably a summary of, and comment on, the view which Storm himself had previously discussed with him and expressed in writing to others: "Der Untergang nur wegen eigener Schuld ist schon mehr eine pädagogische, polizeiliche oder criminelle Bestrafung"<sup>61</sup>, or again: "Zum Tragischen wird meist eine Schuld des (sog.) Helden gefodert. Diese Fassung ist aber viel zu eng und etwas philiströs"<sup>62</sup>. In light of these statements, it is surprising and disappointing that Tilo Alt should make the blunt assertion: "The absence of personal guilt . . . prevents Storm from creating genuine tragedy"<sup>63</sup>. He selects *Hans und Heinz Kirch* and *Der Schimmelreiter* as coming closest to a convincing portrayal of tragedy, presumably since the aspect of moral guilt is more easily identifiable in these works than in certain others, but in doing so he rather misses the basic point that Storm set out to illustrate in the

majority of his later Novellen, namely that the individual often cannot be held responsible for his fate, and hence that it is often inappropriate to speak of punishment or retribution.

Storm's concern to repudiate the long-held view that moral guilt was necessary for tragic effect was shared by his great contemporary and fellow Northerner Friedrich Hebbel. It is known that Storm had read much of Hebbel's work and, despite some reservations, was generally impressed by it. In July 1851 he wrote to Brinkmann:

Hebbels Sachen habe ich ebenfalls alle gelesen. Er ist bei allen Fehlern von den jetztigen Dramatikern doch der bedeutendste. Es ist in ihm das größte Talent und das reinste (d.h. was seinen Willen anlangt) Kunststreben. Jedenfalls ist er der interessanteste und lehrreichste, er strebt das Größte an. <sup>64</sup>

Although Wesselburen, Hebbel's birthplace, was a mere thirty-five kilometres from Husum and there was only an age difference of four and a half years between them, Storm never made his fellow countryman's acquaintance, and it was not until after Hebbel's death that he began to correspond with his widow Christine. Early in 1885 she sent Storm her late husband's diaries, by which their recipient was fascinated and greatly enthused. As he wrote in his letter of thanks to her:

Die Beobachtungen, Gedanken und Urteile gehen nach dem Himmel u. von dort durch die Welt zur Hölle. Es ist ein reiches Geschenk, das der Verstorbene hier noch seiner Nation macht. <sup>65</sup>

Without going so far as to claim that Hebbel exerted a major influence on Storm with regard to his conception of tragedy - for at least the diaries, if not the other works, reached him too late for this to be the case - it is interesting that Hebbel's personal diary entries bear some resemblance to Storm's idea of the "Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen":

Es hängt nicht weniger als Alles davon ab, daß der Begriff der Schuld richtig gefaßt und nicht . . . mit dem untergeordneten der Sünde . . . verwechselt werde, denn wie der Begriff der tragischen Schuld nur aus dem Leben selbst, aus der ursprünglichen Inkongruenz zwischen Idee und Erscheinung, die sich in der letzteren eben als Maßlosigkeit, der natürlichen Folge des Selbsterhaltungs- und Behauptungstriebes, des ersten und berechtigten von allen, äußert, entwickelt werden darf, . . . so ist auch der Begriff der tragischen Versöhnung nur aus der Maßlosigkeit . . . zu entwickeln. <sup>66</sup>

Clearly there is a difference between Hebbel's "Maßlosigkeit" and

Storm's emphasis on the "Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen"; but certainly Hebbel, like Storm, embraced the possibility of a "Tragedy of Necessity", viewing the individual as ultimately powerless against the external forces of fate which are bound to destroy him, and hence assuming a metaphysical, rather than moral, approach to tragedy. Hebbel's idea of life as the conflict of man against outward circumstance was summed up in his words: "Alles Leben ist Kampf des Individuellen mit dem Universum"<sup>67</sup>, and by his portrayal of the sacrifice and downfall of the innocent who invite their destiny by virtue merely of their self-assertion he illustrated his point that tragic guilt and ethical guilt need not be identical. Despite the element of similarity between them, however, Storm's admiration for Hebbel was much more qualified in 1882 than it had been in 1851. In August 1882 he wrote to Klaus Groth:

Die Hebbelsche Dramenpoesie ist eine völlig pathologische. Überall kämpft er den düsteren Kampf mit sich und seinem düsteren Leben. Ihm fehlt so ganz die heitere Behaglichkeit des Schaffens, die - vide Shakespeare! - dem Hörer oder Leser das Gefühl gibt, er gehe hier an einer großen sicheren Hand, und die eben in den größten poetischen Schrecken und Abgründen am nötigsten wird. Das ist nach meiner Ansicht das größte Hemmnis für Hebbels Popularität. <sup>68</sup>

This is highly characteristic of Storm as a mature Poetic Realist, demanding, as he did repeatedly in the correspondence of his later years, "die heitere Behaglichkeit des Schaffens", and seemingly expressing a shadow of doubt, as more recently J.M. Ritchie has also done, "as to how far his [Hebbel's] rather creaky intellectual constructions can genuinely be described as tragic"<sup>69</sup>. The affinities between them therefore are worthy of note, but should not be overstressed.

Another of the most important voices to demand a non-ethical approach to tragedy was Schopenhauer. Although, as we have already considered, it is unlikely that Storm was influenced directly by Schopenhauer's ideas, they are nonetheless of relevance since they constituted one of the major contributions to nineteenth-century aesthetic theory in this area, and since they bear a notable resemblance to Storm's own conception of tragedy. Schopenhauer insisted on moving away from certain traditionally accepted tenets of tragedy such as the concern to achieve order through disorder, to portray tragic resolution as well as tragic suffering, and hence to

lend some degree of coherence and meaning to the whole. Instead he regarded suffering as being rooted in the nature of man and unrelated to ethical considerations, and he defined the subject of tragedy simply as the power of evil and blind fate, "der namenlose Schmerz, der Jammer der Menschheit, der Triumph der Bosheit, die höhnende Herrschaft des Zufalls und der rettungslose Fall der Gerechten und Unschuldigen"<sup>70</sup>. He stressed that tragedy should portray the common lot of humanity, and by virtue of the fact that a terrible, cruel fate could befall normal, everyday characters, not as an exceptional occurrence but as an inevitable reality, thus the effect was intensified:

Sie zeigt uns das größte Unglück nicht als eine Ausnahme, nicht als etwas durch seltene Umstände oder monstrose Charaktere Herbeigeführtes, sondern als etwas aus dem Tun und den Charakteren der Menschen leicht und von selbst, fast als wesentlich Hervorgehendes, und führt es ebendadurch furchtbar nahe an uns heran. <sup>71</sup>

Schopenhauer therefore viewed tragedy as being inseparable from life itself, and as springing directly from an inherent flaw in the nature of man. His position is neatly summed up in a memorable sentence which is strikingly similar to some of Storm's own statements: "Der wahre Sinn des Trauerspiels ist die tiefere Einsicht, daß, was der Held abbüßt, nicht seine Partikularsünden sind, sondern die Erbsünde, d.h. die Schuld des Daseins selbst"<sup>72</sup>. Even if Storm's conception of the "Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen" cannot be extended quite as far as to embrace Schopenhauer's theory of an existential flaw in the whole human race or the idea that the tragic hero must atone for the guilt of existence itself, nonetheless there is a consensus between them that the moralistic approach to tragedy must be abandoned, since in the case where a hereditary flaw or a defect of character leads an individual to disaster, it is not possible or appropriate to apportion blame by saying that any particular law has been transgressed.

The notion of heredity is of course a central one to Storm's understanding of tragedy, and through it he depicts the working of an inescapable fate. In October 1881 he wrote in his diary: "Das nicht bloß poetische, sondern sich fortwährend vor unsern Augen abspielende wirkliche *Schicksal* liegt in der *Vererbung*"<sup>73</sup>, and shortly before this he had related to Schmidt how for a long time he

had been developing his ideas on the potential for tragedy leading from the problem of heredity: "Hierin finde ich seit lange bewußt das Tragische, u. finde das eigentliche tragische Schicksal in der Vererbung der Blutes"<sup>74</sup>. On another occasion he poignantly described heredity as "das moderne Schicksal"<sup>75</sup>, and in this phrase he not only expressed the private and painful conviction upon which much of his work was based, but also clearly anticipated the Naturalist interpretation of reality which assumed that no individual could have an autonomous existence that owed nothing to his forebears. As Carsten, the central figure of the *Novelle Carsten Curator* (1878), declares with sorrowful insight:

ein jeder Mensch bringt sein Leben fertig mit sich auf die Welt;  
und alle, in die Jahrhunderte hinauf, die nur einen Tropfen zu  
seinem Blute gaben, haben ihren Teil daran. (III, 29)

This is a theme to which Storm returned continually as one of the most powerful factors in the motivation of his tragedies, and *Carsten Curator*, in which the impact is sharpened by the fact that the story represents such a close parallel to the writer's own experience, stands out as one of the most devastating of these. But in creating this and other tragedies of genetic compulsion, as we may call them, his purpose was not to present an uncompromisingly biological view of man which showed him as no more than an amalgam of bodily functions and remained uninterested in his spirit. Rather the problem of heredity served for him as an essential component and expression of the "Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen", and his concern was to depict the working out of this tragic fate in the life of the individual as he recognises the reality of the situation and struggles - albeit in vain - to overcome it. If it should follow in the course of this struggle that he also incurs moral guilt, then this is to be seen as an inevitable consequence of his predicament, but not usually as the chief motivating factor behind the tragic catastrophe.

For Storm it is therefore cruel fate which drives the individual into guilt, this fate or hostile element ("dies Feindliche") sometimes revealing itself as it were from within through the disastrous consequences of a natural blood inheritance, or sometimes brought into effect from outside through the prejudice and unsympathetic nature of society. One *Novelle* which clearly diverges from this pattern is *Hans und Heinz Kirch* of which Storm himself said,

referring to the father, "er sündigt und er büßt"<sup>76</sup>, and also *Ein Bekenntnis* and *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*, which we will consider in more detail in Chapter Five, are tales of specific moral guilt and atonement. These exceptions illustrate the fact that Storm was not so intolerant as to exclude totally a "Schuld und Sühne" type of tragedy; but what one essentially finds portrayed many times in his writing is the idea of the "Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen", the notion that the tragic end is not the individual's fault, and yet somehow, paradoxically, the fault is the inner inheritance of his humanity. Storm comments on his Novelle *Carsten Curator*:

Es handelt sich nicht um Schuld und Sühne, sondern um eine Naturnotwendigkeit, die sich zu einem unabwendbaren Fatum gestaltet und den Schuldlosen in Mitschuld hineinreißt; auch der Sohn, der dies veranlaßt, ist rückwärts durch sein Blut verbunden. <sup>77</sup>

*Carsten Curator* is one of Storm's great tragic Novellen in which the writer deals openly with the cruelties, the contradictions<sup>78</sup> and the constraints of human existence without making any attempt to lessen their harshness by poeticising certain aspects. Storm spoke of the work as an "inneren Befreiungsakt"<sup>79</sup>, yet his efforts through it to rid his soul of the dreadful strain and torment concerning Hans did not succeed. The hopelessness which pervaded his thoughts was too great, and this lies like a dark shadow over his work also. This was Storm's own feeling when he wrote to Hermione von Preuschen:

Aber das Glück ist auch zum Menschenleben durchaus nicht nötig, nur die treue Schwester desselben, die Hoffnung, können wir nicht entbehren. Im Leben nicht und nicht in der Kunst. An ihrer gänzlichen Abwesenheit krankt meine Novelle 'Carsten Curator'. <sup>80</sup>

Eight years later, however, he imparted a more optimistic note to the problem of heredity in the Novelle *John Riew* where the central figure is made to say:

es ist jetzt alles gut, denn wir haben die Hoffnung, freilich auch nur diese . . . aber die Hoffnung ist die Helferin zum Leben und meist das Beste, was es mit sich führt. (III, 690)

Even Storm's pessimism then, is not so entirely full-grown as to exclude this spark of hope - indeed, as he himself confessed, life would be altogether too bleak without it. This is the major reason why some of his harshest stories are placed in a gentler, poeticised framework which softens the emotional blow on the reader. In the absence of a classical tragic ending where the illusion of balance and



order was restored, Storm had to employ other means by which to avoid a final, soul-destroying impression of unmitigated wretchedness.

Having made the observation, however, that most of Storm's tragic Novellen tend to be stories of irremediable suffering and disaster to which the more positive concepts of reconciliation or Schillerian sublimity are foreign, one must be careful to refrain from generalisation and from the claim that his works deny the possibility of individual freedom. The problem of fate and free will has been a recurring one since the very beginnings of tragedy. Plato was renowned for his phrase that man was the plaything of the gods, and the ancient literary world in general was not without its share of grim determinists. Even Schiller, for all that one tends to associate him with the great ideals of human dignity and freedom, experienced a growing sense of fatality in his later creative period. In *Über das Erhabene* he turned his attention in part to tragic situations that are beyond the control of man, stressing in particular

die pathetischen Gemälde der mit dem Schicksal ringenden Menschheit, der unaufhaltsamen Flucht des Glücks, der betrogenen Sicherheit, der triumphierenden Ungerechtigkeit und der unterliegenden Unschuld. <sup>81</sup>

But it was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that a thoroughly deterministic approach to literature became widespread. As revolutionary mid-century discoveries in the natural sciences challenged traditional thinking about man and the universe, certain previously accepted propositions were invalidated. The commonly held thought, for example, that the mind of a newborn infant was a *tabula rasa*, and that anything drawn on that tablet was put there by experience, was repudiated by Darwin's theory that an array of instincts was already imprinted on the nervous system at birth. Hence Darwin gave great impetus to the view that what we now call genetic make-up is a powerful determining factor on human life and behaviour, and this was one of the central ideas which the Naturalist writers adopted and developed in their grim depiction of reality. But despite the fact that one can recognise in Storm's portrayal of tragic disaster a similar - albeit less harshly expressed - deterministic attitude, it is worthy of note that at the very end and climax of his career, in the Novelle *Der Schimmelreiter*, a perceptible change in approach emerges. At the close of the Novelle as Hauke Haien meets his end, there is the definite appearance of a fresh dynamism and

self-assertion of the hero which is untypical of Storm.

It is interesting to examine carefully the narration of events on that final night of the storm. The lethargy of the workers is combined with the violent strength of the sea, but while Hauke in great determination of will still insists upon defying both of these forces, the moment eventually comes when he has to watch his wife and child, who have hurried out to stand by him in his hour of crisis, being swallowed up by the waves. It is only now that Hauke's defiant strength gives way. "Das Ende!" he says quietly. But what we witness is not simply fate driving him to his knees and forcing him to capitulate and fall defeated. On the contrary we read: "er richtete sich hoch auf", a stance which, facing the very moment of death, reaffirms the freedom and inviolability of his personal will, and with the cry, "Vorwärts! . . . Herr Gott, nimm mich; verschon die andern!" (IV, 370), he casts himself into the sea. This voluntary death of the hero, which takes place as Stuckert has it "in tiefem Wissen um den Sinn des Opfergedankens, jenes Gedankens letzter Hingabe des einzelnen an sein Werk und an die Gemeinschaft"<sup>82</sup>, is unique in all of Storm's work. Before there was always a certain resignation about the endings of his stories out of a feeling that, despite human resolution, the power of fate is stronger after all, that a process is carried out through natural and environmental forces which is necessary and inexorable, and against which the individual is powerless. Here, however, we gain the impression that Hauke's suicide is not just the sign of his defeat, nor is it merely an attempt to atone for the consequences of a moment of weakness in his professional career - though these elements doubtless have a part to play - but the description of his final moments also suggests at least a glimmer of insight that only through voluntary death can he assert the freedom of his personality at this final stage of his struggle against fate in all its forms. It is therefore with his head held high, in full awareness of his dignity, that he meets his self-chosen end. At the end of *Vom Erhabenen* Schiller had formulated the fundamental laws of tragic art thus: "Diese sind erstlich: Darstellung der leidenden Natur; zweitens: Darstellung der moralischen Selbständigkeit im Leiden"<sup>83</sup>. At the end of Storm's work therefore we can recognise what might be called a tentative move towards the moral freedom of the hero which for Schiller was just as necessary for tragic effect as

the description of his suffering. It would be wrong to claim that Hauke dies inwardly free in the classical Schillerian sense of sublime repentance and regeneration, but at the same time at least a hint of this is present, and his end is not nearly so desolate and pathetic as that experienced by the heroes of other Novellen.

Hans Habe put forward in an essay of 1967 an interesting and thought-provoking view of Storm:

In Wahrheit gehört Storm zu den rätselhaftesten Dichtern der Deutschen . . . Daß sein größtes Werk *Der Schimmelreiter* seine letzte Novelle war, ist wenig verwunderlich . . . Wer den Tod grüßt, hat nichts mehr zu verbergen. Man sollte nicht unbedingt mehr von Storm lesen - man sollte ihn anders lesen.<sup>84</sup>

Unfortunately it is the case that many people have taken up this suggestion, and Storm's work has been read through many kinds of doctrinal spectacles and distorted almost beyond recognition. This, however, should not be our aim; if we talk of reading Storm differently, then it is a matter of putting aside for a moment the commentators' clichés which so easily influence our interpretation and concentrating instead on the textual evidence, backed up by what we know of Storm's own view of the world. It requires little thought for the critic to apply the labels which he has been using throughout his reading of the later Storm until he scarcely has to think any more. It is easy with Stuckert<sup>85</sup> to define Hauke's tragic conflict as being a threefold one with the powers of nature, in this case specifically with the sea, with the opposition of the community and with the intervention of fate or cruel chance events. It requires more thought, however, to move beyond this, as it would seem Storm does, and to define in concrete terms this new movement towards the overcoming of total powerlessness which emerges in *Der Schimmelreiter*. We have become so used to reading the resigned, deterministic Storm that any other angle of interpretation seems inconsistent to say the least, perhaps even sacrilege.

Surely, however, the fact that at the very highest and most mature point of his literary career Storm should begin to struggle seriously for the liberation of the individual from his entanglement with fate is very significant, even if he still does not quite succeed. The critical point is not, as Enno Krey would have it, that the consciousness of man's being subject to the violence of superior

powers "steigert sich in den letzten Jahren zu dem Glauben an die unbedingte Abhängigkeit des Menschen von diesem Schicksal"<sup>86</sup>, but rather that in the unshakeable defiance and autonomy which Storm's heroes display in an ever-increasing measure towards the end and which finds its strongest expression in the figure of Hauke Haien who symbolically "hochaufgerichtet" chooses his own death, man both asserts and preserves his individuality. One is left to speculate whether, had Storm lived longer and been able to continue writing, his subsequent work would have displayed a further development of this subtly but appreciably different treatment of the tragic vision.

In the preceding pages we have considered some of the basic elements of Storm's personal conception of tragedy, noting how it both resembled and differed from ancient and neo-classical ideas, as well as highlighting the aspects in which it is a typical product of nineteenth-century thought patterns and literary development. Several passing references have been made to the Naturalist school of writing, and indeed some degree of comparison between their work and that of Storm is inevitable. It can, however, also be misleading, so in an attempt to clarify the issue, the following pages will be devoted to the relationship between them.

### Section C: The later Novellen: A Prelude to Naturalism?

In the light of the tragic themes which have been discussed thus far, it is not difficult to recognise parallels between Storm's work and that of the European Naturalist writers who were establishing themselves in the mid 1870s and who by 1888 enjoyed widespread recognition. It also comes as little surprise that certain critics have since then sought to underline the similarities behind them, viewing Storm's later Novellen in particular as "Vorboten des Naturalismus"<sup>87</sup>. The Naturalists, having rejected the gently idealised picture of reality drawn by their literary predecessors, described life as it is in accordance with the philosophic theory of determinism, viewing man virtually as a creature without free will, whose behaviour can be explained in terms of the forces, usually heredity and environment, which operate upon him. Much stress was laid by them on the terrible outcome of a hereditary addiction to drink, and on the tragic fate of being a victim of one's environment, helpless and alone in a hard and brutal world, where one's ruin is as inevitable as if brought about by a natural law, and is often accelerated by the indifferent or negative attitude of society. Much of this description of life, even if it is too exaggerated fully to apply to any of Storm's work, nonetheless has a measure of relevance to the later Novellen, especially with regard to their deterministic approach, their themes of heredity, alcoholism and social injustice, and their characters - one thinks of Hinrich Fehse or Carsten Curator - driven by their physical desires.

In 1906 an article on Storm appeared in France which contained the statement: "Nous ne savons s'il a jamais lu Zola, mais - si paradoxal que cela puisse paraître - il y a parfois entre Storm et Zola certaines affinités indéniables"<sup>88</sup>. This same connection had already been mentioned in 1888 by Alfred Biese who describes the plot of *Ein Doppelgänger* as unwinding "mit einer Naturwahrheit, wie nur irgend ein Naturalist sie verlangen kann"<sup>89</sup>. But although he concedes that a certain correspondence between Storm and Zola does exist ("denn beide behandeln mit schneidendem Realismus das Fühlen und Denken dieser unteren, oft so bedauernswerten Menschenschicht"<sup>90</sup>), he is careful to stress the fundamental difference in their approach: "wie warm, wie teilnehmend gemütvoll

ist alles bei Storm dargestellt - und wie erbarmungslos hart, wie humorlos bei Zola!"<sup>91</sup>. Biese makes a crucial point here, and displays a perceptiveness which later commentators have lacked in their eagerness to identify in Storm the still hesitant but unmistakable harbinger of a radically new literary era.

The publication of Storm's letters has now revealed that he had indeed read, or rather attempted to read, Zola's *L'Assommoir* in German translation, but had found it a less than pleasing experience: "Zola versuchte ich vergebens zu lesen, so sehr ich seine Kraft anerkenne; das halte der Teufel aus! . . . Warum soll ich mich von Zola martern lassen?"<sup>92</sup>. Except for a further diary entry in 1888, however, Storm made no further mention of Zola<sup>93</sup>, nor are any other references to particular Naturalist writers to be found in his extensive correspondence. The fact that both Fontane and Turgenev took an active interest in the flourishing Naturalist movement is not revealed in their letters to Storm<sup>94</sup>, and it would appear that the only person to express any opinion to him in written form on the subject was his close friend and colleague Paul Heyse. Not surprisingly, Heyse was unimpressed by such recent trends in literature, as two of his letters of 1886 and 1887 to Storm make clear:

Ich bin aber zauderhaft geworden, da die Zeit immer verrückter wird und allerhand Irrwischen nachrennt, während ich zu meinen alten Gestirnen aufblicke.<sup>95</sup>

Und daß hin und wieder eine Stimme laut wird: es werde einem bei solcher Poesie [i.e. that of Poetic Realism] doch wohler, als bei der Fäulniß duftenden Ibsen'schen Dramatik, nehme ich auch für ein günstiges Zeichen der Zeit. Ich kann nicht glauben, daß es mit dem, was wir große Poesie nennen, ein für alle Mal zu Ende sein soll, weil gewisse Virtuosen des Häßlichen ihre Künste mit so starkem Effekt betreiben.<sup>96</sup>

The fact that Storm does not seem to have replied to these specific comments or indeed to have mentioned Ibsen at all elsewhere indicates the lack of interest or attraction he felt for a movement which was so incompatible with his own artistic approach.

Although Storm's work in compiling the *Hausbuch aus deutschen Dichtern seit Claudius* in the 1860s and early 1870s and his collaboration later in the 1870s with Heyse on the *Deutscher Novellenschatz* and the *Novellenschatz des Auslandes* meant that he was very widely read and well informed with regard to many differing contemporary styles and trends, he was quite adamant in

his insistence that the material to be included should conform to the strict principles specified by the editors: "eine Anthologie *nach meiner Art*" was how he emphatically described it in a letter to Heyse<sup>97</sup>. As Storm increased in maturity he became more and more resolute in his defence of his own art form, for despite the growing harshness in his portrayal of tragedy towards the end of his life, he still held to his original conception of the poetic. In a diary entry of 9.3.1888 he complained that the Naturalist view "verwechselt in ihrer Borniertheit die natürliche Wahrheit mit der poetischen"<sup>98</sup>, thus demonstrating that up until the end he still sympathised most with a style which represented something of a diversion from the bleakest aspects of the real world. We are reminded of the words in his introduction to Klaus Groth's *Quickborn*:

so dürfte es manchem eine willkommene Erquickung sein, für eine kurze Zeit aus dem ungeheuren Allgemeinen in ein individuell Begrenztes, aus der strengen, abspannenden Wirklichkeit in eine ideale Welt einzukehren, wo Kampf und Schuld, die auch hier nicht fehlen, in dem Frieden der Kunst beschlossen und gesühnt sind. (IV, 599)

The question, however, remains unanswered as to how one is to reconcile the above statement which in its fine appraisal of the poetic could almost have been written by Stifter or Keller with a gruesome artistic creation such as *Der Herr Etatsrat*, for example - "wohl diejenige Novelle Storms, die den Idealen der modernen Häßlichkeitsästhetiker am ehesten entspricht"<sup>99</sup>. Perhaps the gradual move towards a more "modern" approach in Storm's later work can best be described, using the words of David Brett-Evans, as an "intuitives Vortasten zum Naturalismus"<sup>100</sup>, for although some affinities cannot be denied, it is false to claim that they are any more than intuitive. Living in a small community which had witnessed little or nothing of the vast nexus of problems created as a consequence of increasing industrialisation and urbanisation, Storm, although he was clearly not unaware of these things, remained virtually untouched by escalating tension and difficulties in the outside world, and it cannot convincingly be maintained that his art was a conscious response to nationwide social upheaval, or a studied treatment of the latest advances in the field of physiology. Storm was aware of the fact that heredity was one of the central motifs employed by what he referred to as "diese sogenannte neuere Schule,

die wieder einmal aus Frankreich gekommen"<sup>101</sup>, but in a letter to Mommsen in 1884 he stated that he had conceived this idea for himself long previously, "ehe die Vererbung von allen Seiten in der Literatur zu spielen anfang"<sup>102</sup>. It must be remembered that this issue of heredity in particular was an intensely personal one for him, arising from his own private experience with his son Hans; by no means was it simply the latest literary trend to appeal to his imagination. The truth behind Storm's statement: "was ich schreibe, schreibe ich, weil mein Inneres mich dazu treibt; niemals um eine Mode mitzumachen"<sup>103</sup> is a bitter and ironic one, and one is constrained to take it seriously in the light of the wealth of biographical material available which conveys the full agony of Storm's position in this respect.

Apart from the insight painfully gained along the path of personal anguish, other non-literary sources may be postulated for Storm's interest in themes also developed by the Naturalists. We recall for instance that his brother Aemil was a doctor, that he was friendly with Ferdinand Tönnies<sup>104</sup>, the sociologist and former schoolmate of his son Ernst, and that he also maintained close contact with people such as Emil Kuh and Erich Schmidt who were keen observers of the birth and growth of new intellectual issues. We have already considered the fact that Storm's later Novellen were written at a time when the world of thought was still ruminating upon the radical conclusions of Feuerbach and Darwin, and there is no doubt that these ideas were the subject of much discussion. By a process of osmosis then at least, it is most probable that Storm gradually assimilated these concepts which dominated the spirit of the times, and it was as a result of the development of his own private thought on such questions, rather than any direct influence of the literary trend-setters, that they began to find expression as significant elements of his later work.

While conceding that Storm's Novellen display an increasing employment of themes which anticipate those characteristic of the Naturalist movement, it must be remembered that thematic content is but one aspect of a literary work. Equally important are the style in which it is composed, the artistic angle from which the subject-matter is approached, and the mood or effect which is



intended; and it is in these respects that the contrast between Storm and the Naturalists can most clearly be identified. His style, as we have seen, was essentially a poetic one, a style which would never have countenanced Zola's view that literature, like medicine, was no longer an art, but rather a science; and his portraiture of character was far removed from that of the Naturalists who tended to paint types rather than individuals. As far as the purposed effect of the work was concerned, it has already been noted that Storm was not indifferent to social issues, and that it was not unusual for him to produce stories which are deliberately polemical in tone, but in comparison to Naturalist writing, even this was mild and the political message and implications were not nearly so radical. Despite some undeniable similarities in theme, therefore, Storm's thoroughly different artistic approach and purpose clearly set him apart from the Naturalist school and help explain his strong antipathy towards their work.

Such feelings of dislike were mutual, for the Naturalists too were unambiguous in their criticism of the Poetic Realists for being backward-looking and for displaying "nicht genügend revolutionäre Substanz"<sup>105</sup>. Their indictment of Storm in particular was harsh, for they disparaged his provincialism and his failure to become involved in what to them were the important issues of the day. The Naturalist author Heinrich Hart, for example, while recognising Storm as "ein Meister der Form"<sup>106</sup> as far as his poetry and the lyrical Novellen were concerned, pointed out the limitations of his non-radical, traditional approach: "Er [Storm] ist kein Führer in den Kämpfen der Zeit, ja, im großen und ganzen haftet seinem Schaffen, dem Ton, dem Stil wie den Stoffen, etwas Altväterliches an"<sup>107</sup>. The writer Hermann Conradi expressed a similar feeling of dissatisfaction that Storm failed to display the revolutionary social idealism regarded by the Naturalists as essential. Referring to the crucial stages in an artist's development which lead to maturity and distinctiveness he wrote:

Theodor Storm hat nie eine *bedeutende* künstlerische Individualität dargestellt. Er hat nie einen eigentlichen 'Sturm und Drang' durchgemacht - er ist in gewissem Sinne nie künstlerisch jung gewesen. Die Herren unserer Literatur sind zu jener, von Berufenen, zumeist aber von Unberufenen, gerühmten 'Objektivität' erst durchgedrungen, nachdem sie sich in stürmischer Subjektivität ausgelebt. <sup>108</sup>

Perhaps the most scornful attack of all those launched from the Naturalist camp came from Carl Bleibtreu, who accused Storm of "verschnörkelte Manierirtheit" and censured him as being devoid of "jede höhere Auffassung, jede Gedankenvertiefung, jede Elementarkraft"<sup>109</sup>. Spiteful and unjust as these comments may be, they serve to illustrate the point that the Naturalists certainly did not regard Storm as a forerunner to their own objectives whose pioneering efforts were to be seen as laudable. On the contrary, they dismissed the age of Poetic Realism for its failure to depict the social and economic problems of the times and condemned the historical setting of many of its Novellen as constituting a withdrawal into an ivory tower, safely removed from the ills and the turmoil of contemporary society.

In the final analysis the emergence of Naturalist elements in Storm's later work should not present any great difficulty. Normally it is to be expected that towards the end of one literary movement one should progressively discern the growing seeds of the next, and unnecessary problems can be created by trying to draw a rigid boundary-line between styles and eras which allows little freedom for the concept of transition. Evidence from Storm's correspondence leaves the reader in no doubt that the work of Naturalist writers, in so far as he encountered it, met with his strong disapproval in accordance with the principles of his conception of art, and there is no question of his consciously trying to imitate it. He was, however, not so pedantic in his attitude as to avoid treating subjects such as open class conflict, the disastrous power of heredity and social and family dissolution and degeneration, which strictly speaking no longer belonged within the more conservative confines of Poetic Realism. The case for Storm is neatly summed up by Brett-Evans who writes:

wir haben in Storms Annäherung an den Naturalismus ein unbewußtes . . . Eingeständnis zu sehen, daß die Themen und Stoffe, von denen er sich in den Jahren nach 1870 zunehmend angezogen fühlte und die den Geist der Zeit getreuer reflektierten, nicht mehr mit den Mitteln des gemäßigten 'bürgerlichen Realismus' zu gestalten waren.<sup>110</sup>

His later work is therefore not to be seen as a betrayal of Poetic Realism or as a radical departure from it, but rather as the final offering of a writer who had truly explored his genre to its outmost perimeter.

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the conceptual basis of Storm's portrayal of tragedy in the later Novellen. Firstly we have considered the important question whether the Novelle may in fact be regarded as a suitable medium for tragedy; secondly we have explored Storm's personal conception of tragedy in an attempt to ascertain how it may be defined in comparison both to older and more modern ideas, and finally we have discussed the relation of Storm's depiction of tragic reality to that of the Naturalist writers. This, though, does not claim to be an exhaustive background analysis; rather it is no more than an initial scanning of fundamental issues which will demand to be investigated in greater detail later. Such concepts, however, become somewhat arid when isolated from the literature itself, so for this reason it is expedient to proceed to the discussion of some of the individual Novellen where the aspects already briefly mentioned may be exemplified and expanded in a less theoretical context.

PART II  
CHAPTER THREE

THE TRAGEDY OF SOCIAL COMPULSION

(*Renate, Ein Doppelgänger*)

In Section C of Chapter One we considered those elements of Storm's world view which are basic to his conception and portrayal of the tragic potential in human existence. Among other aspects we identified his finely-attuned social conscience: his compassion for the plight of the unfortunate and the victimised, and his anger towards those who perpetrate the evils of class distinction and intolerance. In this chapter we will examine this facet of Storm's thought and work in more detail by focusing on the two Novellen *Renate* (1878) and *Ein Doppelgänger* (1886). Both of these stories highlight the fearful capacity of a small, narrow-minded community cruelly to censure, to hound and to ostracise the innocent individual whose non-conformity to its rigid code causes it to feel threatened and to activate its defence mechanisms. Storm clearly illustrates in the works the destructive power and tragic consequences of prejudice, superstition and bigotry, but both tales are also concluded in a conciliatory tone which, even if it cannot compensate fully for the harm and suffering already inflicted, at least tenders the suggestion that there is yet hope for mankind. In 1862 Storm had written: "Intelligenz und Sittlichkeit sind Kräfte, die zur Geltung kommen müssen, und die nicht dulden können, daß Beschränktheit und Unsittlichkeit regiere"<sup>1</sup>. Although this sentiment was originally expressed in a political context, it is equally valid in a much broader sense; it is the essence of Storm's attitude to obduracy and discrimination in society in general, and is a message which cannot be ignored in the pages of *Renate* and *Ein Doppelgänger*.

Modern Storm scholarship is not lacking in commentators who have emphasized this aspect of social criticism. Those writing from a Marxist point of view, notably Vinçon, Goldammer and Böttger, have exploited the material of a socio-political nature in Storm to lend credibility to a Socialist interpretation of his work. A less tendentious approach, however, is adopted by Ingrid Schuster in her book entitled *Theodor Storm. Die zeitkritische Dimension seiner*

*Novellen* (1971), and ten years later by Günther Ebersold in *Politik und Gesellschaftskritik in den Novellen Theodor Storms*. Both of these critics make valid and interesting points, even if Ebersold leans rather heavily upon Stuckert and Schuster seems to find it necessary to identify a "zeitkritische Dimension" in virtually every Novelle, thereby sometimes distorting the issue. But the major disadvantage with Ebersold and Schuster is that while they attempt to cover the full sweep of the topic by surveying a large number of Novellen, each individual analysis must remain very brief, and hence many finer points are overlooked. The aim of this chapter is to examine *Renate* and *Ein Doppelgänger* in more detail than is normally possible for the writer of a less selective work, and to consider carefully the extent to which Storm portrays society in these two instances as being responsible for the tragedy suffered by a particular individual or pair.

#### Section A: *Renate*

Ich finde es [*Renate*] ausgezeichnet, und zwar ohne alles "wenn" und "aber". Ich stelle es über "Aquis submersus", über dessen Schluß, bei höchster Würdigung des Ganzen, sich streiten läßt. So muß gearbeitet werden, aber wie wenige kommen dem nach.<sup>2</sup>

It is most interesting that this fine appraisal of Storm's Novelle *Renate* (1878), coming from a no less discriminating judge than Theodor Fontane, stands at variance with the greater part of subsequent literary opinion. Ironically, he highlights the merit of a work which later was to share a similar fate to that of the other historical Novellen, condemned to reside virtually unnoticed in the shadow of the "masterpiece" *Aquis submersus*. It is unfortunate that, despite Fontane's enthusiasm for *Renate*, commentators have generally failed to recognise it as being worth detailed examination, and most discussions of the work are too brief and perfunctory to afford much insight into its intricacy or truly to reveal its quality as a timeless artistic treatment of the tragedy of unjustified social ostracism. In recent years the balance has been partly redressed by David Artiss who in his book *Theodor Storm: Studies in Ambivalence*, devotes the final chapter to *Renate* under the appropriate title "The Flowering of Technique"<sup>3</sup>. Although Artiss' interest lies primarily in the detailed study of symbol and myth in Storm's work, he also clearly recognises the tragic impact of the Novelle. He points to

Storm's skill in portraying "that kind of society in which the individual is totally circumscribed by the conventions of Church and State"<sup>4</sup>, and in bringing to light the tragic results of "the worst possible kind of religious and secular bigotry"<sup>5</sup>.

Since this question of blind religious dogma and the resultant prejudice and intransigence of an indoctrinated community is the leading theme of the *Novelle*, it is perhaps surprising that it has not been the focus of more critical attention, for here we find one of the most pointed literary expressions of Storm's dislike for the power and influence of institutionalised religion. The subject of witch-hunting had long fascinated Storm. Twenty years before he came to approach it from a literary angle in the *Novelle Renate*, his interest had led him to study various original legal reports on German witch-trials in previous centuries. Something of his horrified reaction to what he read there is conveyed in a letter to Constanze of 1858, where he writes: "Es ist ordentlich graulich, die vergilbten Akten zu berühren, die uns gleichsam die Hand reichen aus der furchtbarsten, finstersten Religion der - freilich erst unlängst vergangenen - Vorzeit"<sup>6</sup>. The *Novelle Renate* therefore presents itself as an indispensable key to Storm's thought on this emotive subject of the witch-hunt. But more importantly, and in a wider context, it furnishes the reader with a valuable insight into Storm's views on the potentially disastrous and tragic effects of the incongruous-sounding and yet often encountered combination of superstition and misguided religious fundamentalism.

*Renate* has been described in the secondary literature as "Storms eigentliche Hexennovelle"<sup>7</sup> or as a "Teufelserzählung"<sup>8</sup> because of the central significance of the witchcraft theme. Although a similar motif is employed in several other *Novellen* (for example *Draußen im Heidedorf* (1871), *Aquis submersus* (1876), *Zur 'Wald- und Wasserfreude'* (1878) and *Im Brauerhause* (1879)), it is in *Renate* that the issue of both individual and corporate belief in demonic forces and in the practice of witchcraft is explored in fullest detail. Storm in fact based the *Novelle* on a true story gleaned from his reading of local eighteenth-century chronicles<sup>9</sup>, and the tale with its historical setting and even a genuine historical character (Pastor Petrus Goldschmidt) owes much to his painstaking consultation of archival

material. Despite these authentic sources, however, the work is much more than a literary treatment of the theme of witchcraft set against the background of pre-Enlightenment theology. Storm himself was quite adamant in stressing the general and ageless validity of the underlying ideas in his historical Novellen in particular. In a letter to Wilhelm Petersen in 1885 he wrote:

Ist in einem Kunstwerk die Darstellung vorübergegangener Lebensformen das *Wesentliche*, so ist dessen Geltung von der Zeitströmung oder besser: von der *Mode* abhängig; ist die Darstellung des rein Menschlichen, für uns des Ewigen, der Inhalt, so kann die Zeitströmung es nicht verwaschen, und eine so bescheidene Benutzung des historischen Außenwerks wie bei mir kann es nicht in den Abgrund ziehen. <sup>10</sup>

Therefore in spite of Storm's meticulous preparation and portrayal of the historical context, in the end he dismisses this as being merely functional and insists rather on the importance of the timeless insight which his work affords into the essence of human nature with all its problems.

Just as the socio-cultural context in which the Novelle is set is not of ultimate significance for our understanding of the point which Storm wishes to illuminate, such is arguably also the case for the socio-cultural context in which it is *written*. Ingrid Schuster implies that the work, composed in 1878, may be an indication of the impact upon Storm of Bismarck's "Kulturkampf" and the contemporary religious fanaticism in which it resulted<sup>11</sup>. Fritz Böttger on the other hand offers a most interesting list of German publications which appeared between 1869 and 1875 on the subject of witchcraft, suggesting that the new upsurge in such interest must have influenced Storm to make it the theme of a Novelle:

im Zusammenhang der großen Auseinandersetzung liberaler Aufklärung mit dem immer noch mächtigen orthodoxen Dunkelmännertum der Zeit, das mit der politischen Reaktion Hand in Hand ging, muß Storms Novelle "Renate" gesehen werden. <sup>12</sup>

Whether Storm had in fact read any of the works which Böttger itemises is highly questionable, and moreover both Böttger and Schuster fail to note that Storm's personal interest in the subject went back much further than the 1870s. Neither critic can tender any proof for his or her suggestions, and this is hardly surprising since Storm's work tends more often to be a treatment of age-old and universal themes than a response to burning contemporary issues.

With these preliminaries in mind we will proceed presently to a detailed examination of *Renate* with particular reference to its tragic effect. Firstly, though, it is helpful to recall the essential points of the story.

The tale is introduced by a framework technique. The narrator's attention is focused on a house in Schwabstedt which according to local legend was originally the home of a witch. His interest is thus aroused, and many years later he finds a manuscript, the personal story of a clergyman named Josias. Thus he is transported back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Josias takes up the tale . . . At the age of fourteen Josias, a pastor's son, falls asleep in a church and on awaking is terrified by a huge dog. He is rescued from its clutches by a pretty girl who in his childish fantasy seems to him like an angel. Years later, while home on vacation from university, he meets her again at a wedding celebration and learns that she is Renate, the proud daughter of the rich "Hofbauer". They fall in love, but their relationship is threatened by the superstitious villagers who are influenced by the witch-hunting talk of the renowned Pastor Petrus Goldschmidt, and think that Renate and her father are in league with the devil. More serious rumours concerning Renate's sinister behaviour are communicated to Josias in a letter from his father, and after completing his theological studies Josias' own fears seem confirmed by Renate's rejection of the consecrated wafer at Communion. His distraught and dying father reminds Josias of his sacred vocation and presses him to promise that he will never marry her. Josias succeeds his father as pastor, but one day throws off his black robe manfully to defend Renate against some crazed villagers who are trying to subject her as a witch to the swimming test. Torn in his feelings for her, he moves to another district . . . The narrative is completed many years later by Josias' nephew Andreas, who records how his uncle's ideological persuasion is radically changed towards the end of his life, and how at last he again recognises Renate as the "angel" from his boyhood. She visits him in his dying months, and helps him to find peace.

The following examination of the Novelle will fall into three parts in an attempt to trace the motivation, the culmination and the resolution of the tragedy. Firstly we will consider the nature of the



Schwabstedt community in which the central characters are placed, plagued as it is by prejudice and superstition. Secondly we will explore the personal development of both Josias and Renate and try to identify the extent to which they themselves are responsible for their tragic plight; and finally we will turn to discuss the eventual insight gained by Josias, the effect of the gentle and conciliatory conclusion, and the overall impact which Storm succeeds in conveying through the work.

### A.1 Prejudice and Superstition

The central narrative of *Renate* is set at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a time of transition in the European religious climate. The period of post-Reformation religious zeal and of ideologically inspired fanaticism was gradually coming to an end, and a more secular, more rational age was dawning. Storm's *Novelle* highlights the tension and mistrust generated in a small, backward-looking rural community by the presence of Renate's father the "Hofbauer", "offenbar ein aufgehellter Kopf und Zukunftsman" <sup>13</sup>, as Keller described him. It paints a vivid picture of a society which not only subscribes to the basest forms of superstition, but also, thinking itself to be waging a holy war on evil heretics and apostates who have rejected their Christian faith and chosen instead to serve the devil, enters with relish into the barbaric activity of witch-hunting. The story of Renate and Josias closes with the latter's ultimate attainment of a state of true enlightenment, but also with all the poignancy of a delayed achievement which comes too late. For throughout his life his path has been shrouded by the mists and errors of misplaced religious zeal, and the needless perplexity and tragedy to which this leads cannot truly be compensated for even by a radical eleventh-hour conversion to tolerance and reason.

The growth and persistence of the practice of witch-hunting in Europe can be traced back in part to the changes in religious attitudes during the age of the Reformation. One of the main sources of the heightened consciousness of, and militancy against, diabolical activity was the thinking of the Protestant reformers Martin Luther and Jean Calvin <sup>14</sup>. These men had widespread influence, not chiefly by the circulation of their published works, but rather through the

great emphasis which they and their followers placed on preaching. From the pulpit men of all social classes, not just a small literate elite, were made conscious of the immediacy of diabolical power that was so apparent in the writings of the reformers. From here it was but a small step for the listeners to making accusations of witchcraft where peasant suspicions of occult practices already existed. Storm's *Renate* is one of his most negative and outspoken artistic portrayals of the sway which the Church as an institution can hold over the common people, and its responsibility for retarding the progress of individual freedom and the enlightenment of mankind in general is presented in an uncompromising manner. In no other Novelle do we encounter such a powerful embodiment of Storm's well-known words that the Church (along with the nobility) was "das Gift in den Adern der Nation"<sup>15</sup>, and that for him it represented one of the two "wesentlichsten Hemmnisse einer durchgreifenden sittlichen Entwicklung unserer so wie anderer Völker"<sup>16</sup>.

Of the three clergymen who feature in the Novelle, the most extreme and dogmatic is without question Pastor Petrus Goldschmidt, a figure who appears only briefly in the tale, yet has considerable influence on the unfolding of events. Storm chooses here to incorporate a genuine historical character from Husum who was intensely involved in the theological struggle in Schleswig-Holstein against the emergence of the more humanistic and rational ideas of the Enlightenment<sup>17</sup>. He was a bitter adversary of the Dutch Protestant theologian Balthasar Bekker who in his work *De Betoverde Weereld*<sup>18</sup> campaigned against witchcraft prosecutions, arguing that the empire of the devil was but a chimera and that he was without the power ordinarily ascribed to him. It was in opposition to this work that in 1698 Goldschmidt published his own polemic entitled *Höllischer Morpheus*<sup>19</sup>. Storm possessed a copy of this unusual book, and clearly used it as a vivid source of information on the kind of religious fanaticism which saw the world as being full of the evidence of Satanic power and set out with blind fervour on witch-hunts in order to purge the Christian community of corrupting, subversive influences<sup>20</sup>. Goldschmidt is portrayed in *Renate* as a vehement and bombastic character, unrefined in manners and inflated with a sense of his own authority. Although Storm holds this ranting clerical figure up to a certain mild ridicule, this should not weaken our

awareness of the manipulative control which he wields with disastrous effect both in Josias' own home and in the community at large. He spends the afternoons of his visit to Schwabstedt wandering around the village, whipping up the old witch-hunting craze among women and the elderly, and by the time he leaves there is "überall ein Gemunkel, welches nicht laut werden wollte und doch nicht stumm sein konnte" (III, 109). As the obsession increases, certain individuals become the focus of the malicious gossip, and we read that "im Dorfe . . . wurde Unheimliches auf den und jenen gedeutet" (III, 109).

Josias' father is not as extreme as Goldschmidt in his religious perspective, but in his peace-loving and moderate manner he is respectful towards his guest in recognition of the latter's superior theological learning and experience of dealing with the world of evil. Although he is rendered "ein wenig müde" by the two-day ordeal of Goldschmidt's visit, his solidarity with fellow clergy does not allow him to express any criticism of the man who in principle shares his own ideological position, albeit with greater militancy. Josias likewise, despite feelings of growing antipathy towards Goldschmidt's coarse and overbearing nature, for reasons similar to his father's, offers little resistance. Looking back, he writes:

denn an die leutselige Art meines lieben Vaters gewöhnet, wollte dessen gewaltige Rede mir nicht allsogleich gefallen, obschon seine geistliche Weisheit und Eifer für das Reich Gottes meine gerechte Ehrerbietung heischeten. (III, 108)

Ironically though, later in the tale Josias is himself in his delusion to assume the same style of "gewaltige Rede" inspired by this brutish inquisitor when he approaches the frightened and confused Renate in the role of the exorcist with the cry: "Exi immunde spiritus! . . . Bekenne! Bekenne! Mit welch argen Geistern hast auch du dein Spiel getrieben?" (III, 125). Moreover Josias' father too demonstrates towards the end of his life the powerful impact which Goldschmidt has had upon him by becoming increasingly suspicious and prejudiced with regard to Renate, and on his deathbed by extracting from his son an oath never to enter upon a marriage with this child of the devil as he sees her.

The figure of Petrus Goldschmidt is therefore one of crucial importance for the story, for through him Storm represents the way

in which the most contemptible superstition and crass intolerance is capable of earning recognition and bringing incalculable influence to bear when it appears under the guise of erudition and of religious orthodoxy. In view of Goldschmidt's decisive function in the motivation of the tragedy, it is disappointing that Böttger ignores him entirely and that Stuckert gives him no more than a brief mention, contrasting him "in seiner urwüchsigen Kraft und vitalen Fülle"<sup>21</sup> with the pale and ailing appearance of the Hofbauer. Schuster mentions him in a brief summary of the plot and also includes his name in a separate list of disagreeable clergymen from other Novellen to illustrate Storm's antipathy towards the Church, but unfortunately enters into no detail whatever. Ebersold comes closest of the critics to recognising the fearful consequence of Goldschmidt's part in the tale, but even he is limited by the scope of his enquiry to less than a dozen lines on the subject. In Storm's portrayal Goldschmidt is the epitome of all that is offensive and damaging about the Church in its role as the guardian of prejudice and superstition. He is the strongest character in the story, and as such must be seen as much more significant than is generally acknowledged by the secondary literature.

In the opening framework section of the Novelle an immediate impression is conveyed of the suspicious and hostile attitude to outsiders by which the village of Schwabstedt is characterised. The old woman known as "Mutter Pottsacksch" tells the narrator about the "witch" who is supposed to have lived there many years before, but due to her wealth - she being a "gewaltige Bauerin" - was able to ensure her own avoidance of prosecution. No one in the community had witnessed any direct evidence of her witchcraft, but the fact that for a period she rode out every Sunday across the moor on her black horse while everyone else was in church was enough to cast grave suspicion on her. After this activity ceased she merely stayed at home, alone in her large, dark room, and "das blasse Gesicht mit den großen brennenden Augen" (III, 75) was symbolic to passers-by of her sinister pursuits. The picture which Storm paints here at the outset of Renate's physical appearance and of the prejudice and superstition in which those who surround her are steeped is reminiscent of the earlier Novelle *Draußen im Heidedorf*. There Margret Glansky's dark eyes and white, pointed

teeth suggest the idea of a werewolf, the typical beast into which witches supposedly could be transformed, and she too is mistrusted and ostracised by society. Since *Renate*, however, is set in an earlier, pre-Enlightenment context, the profound fear of the physical presence of demons which prevailed at this time can be emphasized to even greater effect. Early in the story we learn from one woman's conversation with Josias that the ancient fear of demonically inhabited sites still abounds in this community: "unter dem Thurm bei dem alten Taufstein soll unterweilen itzt der Teufel sitzen und böses Ding sein, mit weltlichen Gedanken ihm vorbeizukommen" (III, 81). Thus it is to be expected that the orthodox should constantly be on the alert for manifestations of evil and wary of the deviant practices of their neighbours. The villagers regard themselves as honest "Christenmenschen", and because Renate differs from them in not going to church on Sundays to hear the word of God, they assume that she must be involved in "Düwelswark". Here we have the picture of a tightly-closed community which is implacable in its defence of its own ideological position. The incapacity or unwillingness to understand anyone displaying traits which are alien and non-conformist stems basically from fear as the community sees its traditional values under threat, and results inevitably in the assumption - with little or no consideration of actual proof - that the offender is in league with the devil, and in his exclusion from the friendship and favour of society.

Renate's character and view of the world are decisively shaped in her early years by two men: her father, commonly known as the "Hofbauer", and Albert Carstens, a verger in Husum who is related to the family. Both of these men are regarded with fear and suspicion by the local Schwabstedt community since they differ so radically from it in attitude and practice. The Hofbauer is a hard-working and competent farmer who has done well for himself due to his forward-looking ideas and techniques. He is a widower, and lives with his only daughter Renate in a large, two-storey house just outside the village, "wie in Einsamkeit und nahezu versteckt unter gewaltigen Bäumen" (III, 84). Just as his dwelling is separated physically from the rest of the community, so too is he isolated from it on an intellectual level, for in his progressive thinking he is also arrogant, and despises the other villagers for their obtuseness.

Josias himself is impressed during a visit to the farm by the way the outbuildings are designed, and notes that the methods used here are superior to the traditional ones typical of the area. The Hofbauer, however, is well aware of the criticism and opposition he faces; pointing out a new gutter he tells Josias: "um dieser Rinne wegen möchten die Kerle hier mich gar am liebsten fressen; nur weil ich letzt beim Neubau den alten Ungeschick nicht wiederum verneuern wollte" (III, 99). But despite the fact that the villagers have much to say about his expertise and prosperity, they do not imitate any of his innovations since his approach is alien to them and they harbour a deep feeling of apprehension towards him.

Although on the one hand the Hofbauer is presented as a man of practical foresight and enlightened thinking, on the other hand his home and person are shrouded by a host of sinister connotations which convince the superstitious community that he is a practitioner of the Black Arts. D.S. Artiss devotes most of his stimulating chapter on *Renate* to highlighting the significance of the many symbols and allusions in the work. While he points to the Hofbauer's gauntness, his pallor and his dark, piercing eyes as typically Stormian hieroglyphs for intelligence and enlightenment, he also draws particular attention to the magpies, ancient symbols of doom, which surround the house, and to the repeated references to the farm as being sombre, black or dark<sup>22</sup>. Another motif used to good effect concerns the Hofbauer's stockings, one of which always hangs down. This is suggestive of the old Germanic superstition that those in league with the devil were only permitted to wear one garter<sup>23</sup>, and the sinister implication is intensified by the fact that when the old servant Marike attempts to knit the stockings more tightly, "so tanzet es ihr wie Fliegen vor den Augen oder wimmelt wie Unzeug über ihren alten Leib" (III, 114). Marike is typical of the elderly figures, often spinsters, who feature in a number of Storm's Novellen and serve as the purveyors of superstition, local hearsay and old wives' tales. (One thinks of women like Bas' Ursel in *Aquis submersus*, Frau Glansky in *Draußen im Heidedorf*, lange Trina in *Zur 'Wald- und Wasserfreude'*, the "Wirtin" in *Im Brauerhause* and Trin' Jans in *Der Schimmelreiter*.) It is Marike who adds fuel to the fire of the villagers' gossip, the primitive and fearful nature of which is revealed in the pub scene when Josias drops the name of the

Hofbauer into the conversation. "Jungherr, Jungherr! Wisset Ihr, was die Schwarze Kunst bedeutet?" (III, 94), is the disquieting reply which he receives, and he is treated by the village tailor to an account of the Hofbauer's doings which suggests that his success, for example in the immunity of his cattle to an epidemic which brings death to the animals of the other farmers, is due to the dark supernatural powers with which he is involved.

A further episode related by the tailor in this scene concerns a plague of rats and mice which had destroyed local stores of grain. Suddenly and inexplicably, however, a host of the vermin was seen one night rushing noisily from the Hofbauer's barn and straight into the river. Another allusion to this strange event is made the next day when Josias pays his promised visit to Renate and her father and his attention is caught by "ein seltsam Zierath, ein unförmlich und scheußlich Grauenbild . . . aus rothem Thon" (III, 95). This unusual piece of pottery is in fact a primitive object of pagan worship, brought back by the Hofbauer's seafaring uncle as an anthropological souvenir, so to speak. "Das ist der Fingaholi!", explains Marike, but her attitude to it differs radically from that of her master: "Der Pastor darf's nicht wissen; aber gläub Er's mir, der ist gar gut gegen die Mäus und Ratten" (III, 96). Josias' thoughts return involuntarily to the tendentious words of the tailor, and already it is becoming clear that the prevalence of superstitious gossip is reducing his ability to judge in an unprejudiced manner. It is ironic that the Fingaholi, which for the rational Hofbauer is a collector's item of educational and cultural interest since it offers an insight into an unenlightened age and a mysterious and occult religious system, in fact assumes significant status in the eyes of onlookers as the indication of a much more sinister preoccupation. Despite the liberal, forward-looking ideology and practice which are so much in evidence throughout the house and farm, there is at the same time a strange interplay of images of light and dark, and an ominous atmosphere weighs heavily in this scene between Josias and the Hofbauer which is dispelled only when Renate returns to the room.

This visit to Renate's home is, however, not the last time that Josias encounters the problematic issue of the rats and mice. A

similar instance to that described by the tailor occurs one October night as he is taking his leave of Renate: a huge army of the creatures streams out of the barn, across the ground beside them and out of sight towards the river. Josias sees that Renate is shaking, but she does so out of hatred for the people and their malicious gossip, not out of fear:

Die Ratten machen mich nicht fürchten, die laufen hier und überall; aber ich weiß gar wohl, was sie von meinem Vater reden, ich weiß es gar wohl! Aber ich hasse sie, das dumm und übergläubig Volk! Wollt nur, daß er über sie käme, den sie allezeit in ihren bösen Mäulern führen! (III, 112)

Here the closeness of Renate's relationship with her father is clearly discernible. Rational and intelligent just as he is, she regards the movement of the rats as a natural phenomenon, but the sight rekindles her anger towards the community which in its ignorance and superstition is inflicting unjust mental anguish on her beloved father who is already physically weak due to a heart condition. Josias is horrified to see her shake her fist in the air and seemingly to invoke the curse of the Evil One on these people. Although this is no more than an impassioned expression of her bitterness and she disclaims any belief in the true power of the devil: "Aber er ist unmächtig; er kann nicht kommen!" (III, 112), Josias claims to recognise in her alarming outburst the influence of the verger Albert Carstens from Husum. This is the man to whom Renate's father had sent her to broaden her education, but whom Josias regards as an atheist and an evil manipulator of the thoughts of this innocent "angel". Carstens is a trained theologian, but having spoken out during an earlier visit to Schwabstedt against the Church's error in its dogmatic determination to identify and root out what it sees to be widespread Satanic influences among the people, he is castigated by Josias' father as a dangerous "Schwärmer" who undermines the teaching of the Church and leads honest people astray in the name of reason and enlightenment. Although Josias is frightened and repelled by the thought, this man has been Renate's spiritual mentor; it is he who has reinforced her father's approach in teaching her to think independently and rise above the base superstition which abounds in their society. But while Renate has spent the previous year enlarging her perspective on life under the tutelage of the verger, Josias ironically appears now to be undergoing the reverse process: as an enthusiastic young theology student who might be



expected to possess an enquiring and open mind, he is perhaps unconsciously, but nonetheless perceptibly allowing his sight to be blurred by the insidious tactics of the villagers, and his prejudice against the Hofbauer is increasing.

The loquacious tailor has a final significant part to play in the reinforcement of Josias' growing bias against the Hofbauer at this stage in the tale. The morning after the disturbing episode of the rats, as Josias is about to set off for university again, he is met by the tailor who is journeying in the same direction. Hence Josias, who would have preferred to be alone, is subjected to the unwelcome presence of a travelling companion "dem allezeit das Maul überlief" (III, 114). The tailor's discourse focuses again on vicious rumours surrounding Renate's father, but although Josias reminds himself repeatedly that this man is no more than an empty-headed gossip, he does not attempt to speak out in the Hofbauer's defence, and the tailor's words leave a bitter taste in Josias' mouth which refuses to go away. Thus a further step is recorded in the subtle process by which Josias is lured into the ruinous trap of prejudice along with the rest of the community. Instead of questioning what he hears and examining the evidence carefully for himself, he is slowly but surely influenced by the ghetto mentality and eventually reaches the point where he can no longer consider the matter rationally.

The reader may nonetheless empathize with Josias in his difficult position, even if he cannot pardon him entirely, for it is true that the figure of the Hofbauer is not an unambiguous one. Shortly after the publication of the *Novelle*, Keller complained in a letter to Storm of the "mysteriöser Zug"<sup>24</sup> which pervades the tale as a result of the ambivalence surrounding the Hofbauer and his practices. Storm wrote in reply: "Den 'dunklen Punkt', den Sie anmerken, anlangend, so mochte ich den mysteriösen Hintergrund nicht missen; die Ratten erlaubte ich mir als, zwar unheimlich, aber doch der Natur nicht widersprechend"<sup>40</sup>. He goes on in the letter to illustrate his point by relating a similar instance concerning a huge exodus of rats which had been witnessed in reality. Storm's portrayal of the Hofbauer in *Renate* must necessarily be vague if two contrasting evaluations of him are to be rendered equally plausible. It is first and foremost upon the reaction of society to this one individual that

the motivation of the tragedy is based, for their judgement of him is extended in due course to his daughter also, and the consequences for her are grievous.

Thus Storm makes an incisive social comment in depicting the way in which a narrow-minded and self-defensive community, when presented with the choice between a rational and a superstitious interpretation of reality, is indoctrinated and predisposed to opt for the latter. The tiny company of Renate, her father and the verger Albert Carstens - who does not even appear in person - represent something of an isolated bastion of enlightenment and reason, but one which is to be beleaguered and eventually destroyed by the ruthlessness of those who follow the signal to close in upon it. The *Novelle* reveals how this army of assailants operates on two levels, a religious and a secular one. It is the Church, represented in the extreme by Petrus Goldschmidt, which, albeit with pious intention, incites the common herd to participating in a blind and frenzied witch-craze; and then the uneducated populace itself, whose spokesman is the tailor, mixes this Church-inspired bigotry with a wealth of ancient lore and superstition which serves only to intensify its prejudice and inflict untold suffering upon its innocent victim. This is the foundation of the tragedy and the impelling force behind it; hence the necessity to call attention initially to those characters who epitomise the thinking of society both on its religious and secular levels, but whose significance is generally overlooked by the critics. Having thus considered the social context of the tragedy, we may now proceed to a more detailed examination of the two main characters themselves.

## A.2 Dogma and Blindness

Despite the fact that the central narrative of the *Novelle*, written from Josias' point of view, affords little insight into the private thoughts of Renate herself, and that Storm resolved to make her name the title of the *Novelle* only after much hesitation<sup>26</sup>, still she is arguably one of his most memorable female characters. She is portrayed throughout as an enigmatic figure, with a delicate balance being preserved in the interplay of motifs suggestive of both angel and witch. The first detailed picture which we have of Renate,

describing her behaviour at the "Bauernhochzeit", is not entirely favourable, and contrasts sharply with the earlier, fleeting image of the saving angel in the church. She is described as standing deliberately apart from the others who are unselfconsciously enjoying themselves, and she displays a haughty disregard for those who approach her to invite her to dance. This attitude of arrogant superiority towards the villagers is revealed again on various occasions, and although the prejudice of the community towards her father is bound to render normal relations difficult by making her feel threatened and act defensively, the question remains whether she might not have been able to ameliorate the situation, at least among her contemporaries, had she possessed the positive will to do so.

Difficult though it may be therefore to substantiate the claim that she is the embodiment of graciousness and decorum, Stuckert stands out as being surprisingly sympathetic towards her, describing the tale as "die Geschichte von der Hexe, die eine Heilige war"<sup>27</sup>. Böttger, on the other hand, is less romantic in his analysis; he writes: "Die Hexe von Schwabstedt war gewiß keine Heilige, aber immerhin der fortgeschrittenste und aufgeklärteste Mensch ihres Dorfes"<sup>28</sup>. The dispassionate pragmatism of Böttger's approach, however, overlooks the fact that the work is primarily a tragic love story, and interprets it instead as if it were a Socialist homily. The closing lines of his section on *Renate* are particularly incisive in their criticism of the Church as bearing total responsibility for the tragic outcome of the Novelle:

Darin liegt die Anklage der Erzählung, nicht gegen die einfachen Menschen, die von allem humanistischen Wissen abgeschnitten dahinlebten, sondern gegen jene Kirchenmänner, die "an Teufelsbündnisse und an schwarze Kunst glaubten und solch törichten Wahn für einen notwendigen Teil des orthodoxen Christenglaubens erachteten", obwohl sie es besser hätten wissen können. <sup>29</sup>

Böttger's invective against the belief and practice of the Church, as we have already considered, is an essential element of Storm's own conviction, but his determination here to absolve the common people in the story from blame in the sense that they "know not what they do" indicates rather a tendentious reading of the Novelle which is not supported by the textual evidence. We have already examined the manner in which the superstitious villagers thrive on hearsay

and consciously seek to manipulate others to join their side, even when the information which they supply as "evidence" is highly suspect. Added to this are numerous examples of their calculated moulding or embellishment of facts in their stories to make them sound more sinister. The following exchange, for instance, concerns the rumours surrounding the "witch" Renate, and takes place between the narrator of the opening framework and the old woman known as Mutter Pottsacksch:

"Und war das Pferd, worauf sie ritt, denn schwarz?" fragte ich endlich, um mein schnell geschaffenes Phantasiebild doch in etwas zu vervollständigen.

"Swart?" schrie Mutter Pottsacksch, wie entrüstet über eine so überflüssige Frage. "Gnidderswart! Dat mag de Herr wull löwen (glauben)!" (III, 75 f.)

It is not until the closing framework that the reader discovers that Renate's horse was in fact "fahlgrau" (III, 136). Also, in the tailor's account of the mysterious exodus of rats, he describes it as happening "mit Quieksen und Gepfeife" (III, 94), as if the infernal uproar were indicative of some demonic activity, whereas the similar scene which Josias and Renate observe in reality takes place in silence. The person responsible for perhaps the most serious misrepresentation of Renate herself is the maid Margreth from Josias' household. On the night Renate's father goes missing and they comb the moor in search of him, Margreth relates afterwards how Renate suddenly cries out despairingly into the darkness for word of him. She then tells how a moment later "so ist aus der finsternen Luft gleich wie zur Antwort ein erschreckliches Geheul herabgekommen, und es ist gewesen, als ob hundert Stimmen durch einander riefen und eine mehr noch habe künden wollen als die andere" (III, 119). This frightening noise, which receives no rational explanation in the Novelle, we may assume is simply a cacophany of alarmed cries produced by various birds and animals which are disturbed as Renate's voice reverberates across the moor. But it is immediately interpreted as a sinister communication from the dark forces with which Renate and her father are reputedly in league, and this information, passed on to Josias in a letter from his father, is among the final decisive factors to confirm Josias' fears and accelerate the development of events towards the tragic end. In light of these vivid examples of deliberate distortion of the truth on the part of the villagers, the ill-founded nature of Böttger's argument that they

are fully innocent is clearly exposed.

Renate is a character who is not only misrepresented but also misunderstood. It is true that she is proud and obstinate, but the isolated position in society which she occupies from childhood onwards makes it almost inevitable that she should develop these characteristics in order to survive. As well as the negative features in her personality, however, the image of the "angel" is recurrently suggested in her loving and protective attitude towards her father in particular, and ultimately towards Josias for whom she waits so patiently for many years. Renate is intense in all the feelings she expresses, whether they be of love or of hatred, and her antipathy towards the members of the community for the way they have caused her father to suffer extends even to a revulsion at the prospect of any kind of physical contact with them. This is the reason why Renate twice refuses to drink from an already used glass at the wedding; yet although Josias is aware of her aversion in this respect, his dogmatic entrenchment renders him blind to this as the reason for her rejection of the consecrated wafer at Communion. She begs him to believe her that it has been the terrible sight of the two deformed old people who have drunk from the cup before her which causes the wafer to fall from her trembling lips, but he disregards her plea for mercy and can see her behaviour only as the evidence of the diabolical involvement of which everyone has already suspected her.

Keller in his appraisal of the Novelle aptly describes Renate as a character who is "eigentlich pikant" and intellectually superior to Josias<sup>30</sup>, and indeed she is the figure, rather than Josias, who has continued both to intrigue commentators and to win their sympathy ever since. Although Renate is clearly no pious or unworldly paragon of virtue, and it is only in Josias' over-fanciful imagination that she appears as an angel, it is nonetheless poignant that a woman of such intelligence, determination and long-suffering should be persecuted and ostracised from the community as a so-called witch. The final picture which we have of her is a positive one as she is briefly reunited with Josias, but the narrator's reassuring closing comment that, despite the malicious rumours, "Du und ich, wir wissen besser, was sie war" (III, 137), offers cold comfort when we

consider how her tragic alienation continues throughout her life, and she must forsake for ever any hope of rediscovering the consolation of a genuine loving relationship. It has been suggested by Stuckert that Renate suffers more deeply than Josias in her lifelong isolation, and that she is the genuine tragic hero of the *Novelle*. He refers to Storm's tendency in his later works to draw a distinction between the main character and the hero, thus precluding a traditionally straightforward interpretation. Stuckert writes: "Renate erweist sich im Gange der Erzählung nicht nur als die menschlich Größere und Stärkere, sondern sie ist auch die eigentlich tragisch Leidende"<sup>31</sup>. Böttger too sides with Renate as the suffering party, and even implies in his closing sentences that Josias, far from being the tragic hero himself or even sharing Renate's tragic position as victim, instead must carry with the Church the responsibility for the adversity caused<sup>32</sup>. Hans Naue on the other hand, in his dissertation "Das Problem von Schicksal und Freiheit bei Theodor Storm", is quite adamant in his rejection of the argument that Renate is the tragic hero, basing his case on the fact that we learn so little of what goes on inside her mind:

Nichts erfahren wir über ihren schweren seelischen Kampf, den sie in ihrer Ausgestoßenheit mit der Gesellschaft führt . . . Nichts erfahren wir von ihrer inneren Auseinandersetzung mit Josias, dem einzigen Menschen, mit dem sie sich in ihrer Einsamkeit verbunden fühlt . . . Nichts erfahren wir von ihrer nur aus der Größe eines freien Menschenthums kommenden Selbstüberwindung und -erhöhung, aus der sie Josias . . . zuletzt wieder die Hand reicht.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the validity of Stuckert's and Böttger's comments regarding the grief and distress unjustly inflicted upon Renate, Naue's standpoint corresponds most closely to the sentiments which Storm himself expressed concerning the work. In February 1878 he wrote of the difficulties the *Novelle* had presented, "da der Konflikt sich zum größten Teil im Innern einer und derselben Person abzuspielen hat"<sup>34</sup>. A few years later in 1881 he still regarded Josias as both principal character and tragic hero when he referred to "'Renate', wo das Feindliche sowohl in die Seele des Helden, als in die Außenwelt gelegt ist und so die schöne Zeit der Liebe in Trümmer schlägt"<sup>35</sup>. This, together with the fact that he resorted to the "Nottitel" *Renate* out of dissatisfaction with the others he had considered<sup>36</sup>, rather than to denote the most important figure,

strengthens the indication that it was the development and tragic predicament of Josias with which he was primarily concerned.

In *Renate* the figure of Josias is an interesting one in that he appears to undergo a radical change within a short period of time. On first reading it may seem incongruous that the amiable and spirited student who strides around confidently "in hohen Stiefeln und einem rothen Rockelor mit einem Degen an der Seiten" (III, 82) should so swiftly turn into the much paler and more narrow-minded young cleric who bows to the motto "Das Irdische ist eitel" and is prepared to sacrifice personal happiness on the altar of conformity to the intolerant demands of his profession. A careful examination of the early part of his development, however, reveals that the later picture presented of him is in fact not inconsistent with his character as it is portrayed from the outset. One of the most significant scenes in this respect takes place when Josias at the age of fourteen enters the church to listen to the organ being played. Lulled by the music, and imagining that the two angels from the crucifixion scene at the altar have flown down to him and covered him with their golden wings, he soon falls asleep. But when he later awakes to find himself locked in, this time his over-active imagination begins to suggest monstrous terrors to him: beside one of the tombs a carved skeleton representative of death suddenly appears alive and threatening, and although he admits that it is no more than a "thörichtes Phantasma" (III, 79), in panic he takes refuge on an equestrian statue of St. George. It is then that the church's guard-dog, which has just been put into the building, rushes to attack him, and he attempts to fend it off with a lance from the hand of St. George. On hearing the uproar, however, Renate hurriedly enters the church and restores calm by reprimanding the dog. All of this makes a vivid impression upon Josias' psyche, and Renate's saving action seems to him "als flöge oben von dem Krucifix der eine Engel wiederum zu mir herab und risse mit seinen Armen den grimmen Tod von meinem jungen Leibe" (III, 80). In retrospect the incident gains so greatly in significance for him that his recollection of it becomes quite out of proportion with what actually happened, for he recounts it as having been "eine Leibesgefahr . . . welche gar leicht allen Studien eine plötzliche Endschaft hätte bereiten können" (III, 77). This is a typical example of Josias' inclination to

interpret life in extremes: just as his reaction to the dog is irrationally frenzied - for him it is a savage and lethal monster, and yet it is later described by Renate as being in fact "der frömmste Hund im ganzen Dorf" (III, 88) - so too his fanciful vision of Renate as a radiant guardian angel is subsequently revealed to be an exaggeration of reality. This early episode in the church is therefore an important one for the reader's understanding of Josias' character and as a preparation for the extremes of behaviour which he displays after his studies are completed. Artiss appropriately sums up the significance of the church scene thus:

this is what he figuratively attempts for the rest of his life, fighting the supposed powers of darkness in place of the black dog, resisting the powerful and seductive attractions of a so-called witch, preaching the Gospel from the pulpit. His tragedy is that he is never quite able to distinguish the real rights and wrongs of issues and only in old age does the wisdom of experience teach him that he has been tilting at the windmills of hearsay and superstition, instead of tackling the more dangerous problems of bigotry and pseudo-theology. <sup>37</sup>

A valuable insight into Josias' family background is offered on the occasion of his first visit home from university. His mother greets him warmly and is delighted by his youthful exuberance, but his father, while also pleased to see him, is more sober in disposition and is concerned primarily with the ultimate goal of his son's studies, rather than attaching value to the passing pleasures of the student lifestyle: "Ja, ja, Mutter; ich sehe, der Bruder studiosus ist gar wohl gerathen; wollen sehen, ob der theologus darum nicht schlechter sei" (III, 84 f.). Despite his father's sternness, Josias is by no means a rebellious character, and even while away from home is careful in his choice of study topics, avoiding those courses which are taught from a more liberal and enlightened perspective and minimise the power of the devil. "Solches war nicht in meinem und meines lieben Vaters Sinne" (III, 83), he relates, thus demonstrating his respect for his father's views and his willingness to continue in the orthodox approach of the family pastoral tradition.

Tension or conflict are therefore absent from Josias' relationship with his father in the early part of the narrative, and it is only when he rediscovers Renate at a local wedding that the atmosphere between them changes. It becomes clear that his father's greatest



ambition for his son is not that he should find happiness and fulfilment in his own personal way, but that he should adhere closely to the ideological persuasion of his forebears. His attitude conveys nothing of the joy or the graciousness stemming from a New Testament faith, but rather his view of the world is a strict and legalistic one to which the concept of individuality is foreign. Moreover, he does not credit Josias with the ability to know genuine love, assuming instead that he has been beguiled by "des Mädchens irdische Schönheit" (III, 119), and his letter to Josias reveals the extent of his alarm regarding this relationship as he resorts to the unscrupulous tactic of passing on mere hearsay from a superstitious servant in an attempt to dissuade him from marrying this sinister girl. On his deathbed his distress increases further, and assuming the stance of an Old Testament patriarch, he seeks to impress upon Josias the significance of the sacred calling which has been passed down through the generations of their family: "vergiß nicht unseres heiligen Berufes! - - Des Hofbauren Haus ist keines, daraus der Diener Gottes sich das Weib zur Ehe holen soll!" (III, 127). The old man breathes his last while attempting to extract from Josias the promise to forsake Renate and pursue single-mindedly his all-important vocation. But Josias is stirred by the authority of his father's words, and swears with conviction nonetheless: "Ich gelobe es, mein Vater! Mög die entfliehende Seele noch deines Sohnes Wort vernehmen!" (III, 128). Thus Josias, who despite his love for Renate has never doubted his father's word or flagged in his respect for him, now unconditionally offers the oath required of him and thereby seals his own and Renate's fate. The thought does not suggest itself to him that his father's judgement may have been wrong, or that Goldschmidt, whose impact on both of them has been decisive, may be no more than a deluded and intolerant fanatic. Josias' fault, ironically, is the blindness of his unquestioning acceptance and obedience, but at the same time the constraints under which he operates serve to mitigate his guilt.

Stuckert's interpretation of the tragedy is somewhat contradictory. He rightly comments that Josias' belief in witchcraft and in the power of the devil "mehr der Umwelt und überstarken persönlichen Einflüssen entspringt, seinem Innern dagegen ganz ungemäß ist und von ihm nur als schwere Last getragen wird"<sup>38</sup>.

This indeed corresponds to the points we have already considered, and is borne out by the development of the closing framework of the *Novelle* when Josias is finally able to free himself from this burden and discover his true self. Later in his analysis, however, Stuckert maintains that it is "echte, starke Frömmigkeit"<sup>39</sup> which motivates Josias to put his religious vocation above his desire for worldly happiness. He asserts that Josias and Renate decide to separate "weil sie ihr individuelles Ich behaupten wollen und nicht bereit sind, es der Liebe zu opfern"<sup>40</sup>, this "individuelles Ich" being in Renate her rational, enlightened approach to life and in Josias his deep personal piety. The problem with such an interpretation is that it overlooks the essential irony of the tragedy. Had their parting been a mutual, sober decision to relinquish love in favour of the egotistical path of self-assertion and fulfilment, then their story, although conveying some sense of loss, would scarcely be a tragic one. But the poignant truth is that Josias, far from being able to make such a confident and independent decision, has been gradually manipulated by the Church into a position of unquestioning conformity to its dogma, and he knows that the role prescribed for him allows no room for the development or realisation of his own convictions. Any attempt to break out of the rigid code of conduct which he is expected to observe would lead to the kind of ostracism from the religious community experienced by Albert Carstens, and would require greater individuality and a much stronger personality than is possessed by Josias. He has been taught from an early age to find his identity and security in the institution of the Church rather than in himself, and must hold on to this at all costs in order to survive.

Having said this, however, it would be wrong to convey the impression that Josias is merely a weak-willed and pathetic character who lacks the dignity of a tragic hero. There is one scene in which he excels himself by demonstrating a level of courage and integrity sufficient to refute any subsequent accusation of puniness or irresolution. This is the one in which he takes on single-handed the crazed group of villagers who are trying to subject Renate to the witch's swimming test. Alarmed and incensed by what is happening, he springs valiantly to Renate's defence: "Da überkam es mich, und ich lösete mein geistlich Gewand und warf es von mir auf den Boden;

denn das junge Blut war damals noch in meinen Adern" (III, 129 f.). Josias grapples violently with one of the ringleaders, unintimidated by the taunt of "Hexenpriester" and by the brute strength of his opponent. Before long he is dealt a paralysing blow which sends him to the ground, but his intrepid effort has nonetheless been sufficient to save Renate, for the mob takes flight in fear on realising the seriousness of having injured a man of the cloth. The following scene, where Renate hastens to Josias' aid and the two are momentarily reunited, is one of the most intense and painful in the *Novelle*. Josias is overwhelmed afresh by his love for her, but yet the words of his dying father ring relentlessly in his ears: "Vergiß nicht unseres heiligen Berufes! - - - Das Irdische ist eitel!" (III, 131). As Renate faints and he wrestles desperately with the pain of the decision he must make, a couple approaches and he leaves Renate to their care, returning home in his anguish to spend the evening in fervent prayer as he confirms his resolve to repress his passions and defer to the exigencies of his vocation. This scene is a particularly vivid illustration of Storm's statement concerning the inner conflict experienced by the hero. The hostile force ("das Feindliche") with which Josias must contend is placed according to Storm "sowohl in die Seele des Helden, als in die Außenwelt", and so the reader witnesses the agony of the tragic figure who struggles to come to terms with his own fluctuating emotions and with the dogmas and judgements imposed on him by Church and community.

Josias' manuscript ends shortly after reporting this final painful decision to forsake Renate for ever. Despite good prospects at home, he feels constrained to move away, and apart from a few rumours which filter through to him during the next few years, he hears no further news of her fate. His closing unanswered question, "ob Gott sich ihrer schon barmherzig **angenommen**" (III, 132), offers a last indication of his sombre presentiment that life will have held little joy for her. This technique of telling the tale from the intensely personal perspective of the hero through his own manuscript is employed to good effect in *Renate*. It is not until after he has committed his story to paper that Josias' mind is at last illuminated and his conversion is made possible, and this process of re-evaluating his ideological position by relating the crucial events and subjective impressions of his youth helps him towards his

ultimate insight. Thus the reader interprets the story with the benefit of ironic distance - not unlike the irony of classical tragedy - , identifying the extremes in Josias' behaviour where he himself cannot see them, recognising for what they are the base superstition and intolerance which appear under the guise of theological erudition and orthodoxy and hence demand Josias' obeisance, and witnessing the tragedy inexorably in the making.

### A.3 Insight and Resolution

The closing framework of the Novelle is dated 1778, many decades after the main narrative, and concludes the tale from the perspective of a more advanced and enlightened age. It takes the form of a letter written by Josias' nephew Andreas Jensen to accompany the older manuscript and record the final details of the story. Towards the end of his life Josias moves to Ostenfeld to live with his cousin Pastor Mercatus. Although both cousins are similarly orthodox in their religious views and both believe in the reality of the devil and of the Black Arts, Andreas notes that Josias, whose dominant characteristics are his "milde Freundlichkeit" and "schwermuthsvolle Heiterkeit" (III, 135), is not nearly as radical in his approach as the other man: "Der Ostenfelder Pastor that dieses im zornigen Bewußtsein eines wohl gerüsteten Kämpfers, der Onkel Josias dagegen, zu dessen zarter Gemütsbeschaffenheit dieser wilde Glaube gar übel paßte, schien selbigen mir gleich einer Last zu tragen" (III, 134). Andreas, who, as Schuster puts it, has grown up "ganz im Zeichen der Aufklärung"<sup>41</sup>, sees this discrepancy between his uncle's outward conformity and what seem to be deep underlying doubts, and attempts to free him from his dogmatic ideology by quotations from Scripture and by using rational, human argument. Yet Josias stoutly, even if painfully, defends his position, as if holding on to his belief is his only means of justifying the actions which have so radically affected his entire life and denied him the happiness he might otherwise have enjoyed. The fact, however, that Josias presents his views "wie in schmerzlicher Ergebung" (III, 134) and that the whole question of his stance in this ideological debate weighs upon him "gleich einer Last", indicates that his conscience is strangely disturbed. Although he has paid lip-service to the "orthodox" view on account of his profession, his heart has been elsewhere, and the

text conveys a hint that he has gone through life strained by a profound disquiet resulting from at least a subconscious awareness of his guilt. Thus the portrayal of his deep-seated perplexity in the final section of the Novelle is reminiscent of many of Storm's other tragic figures, burdened with self-reproach at the realisation that their actions, even if motivated with good intent at the time, have embroiled them in ineluctable guilt. Dr. Jebe in *Ein Bekenntnis* gives poignant expression to this when he describes the bearing of such a weight to be "so mühselig, daß ich, wäre es möglich, an den Rand der Erde laufen würde, um es in den leeren Himmelsraum hinabzuwerfen" (IV, 246).

Eventually, however, Andreas is amazed one evening to find his uncle suddenly transformed and declaring "mit strahlendem Antlitz" that they will dispute no longer, for he has at last recognised that the dogmatic beliefs to which he has held on firmly throughout his life have blinded him to the truth. He proclaims his transforming insight with great conviction: "ich weiß es itzt in diesem Augenblick: der Teufel ist nur ein im Abgrund liegender unmächtiger Geist!" (III, 135). Thus Josias finally acknowledges the belief which Renate herself had expressed of the devil many years previously: "er ist unmächtig; er kann nicht kommen!", though he attributes his conversion not to the logical argument of Thomasius<sup>42</sup>, but to the merciful inspiration of the Almighty whose intervention at the eleventh hour of his life has illuminated the darkness of his prejudice and misconception. It is therefore clear that Josias retains his faith in God; he does not behave out of character, being transformed in an instant into an atheistic humanist and renouncing all the values he has ever stood for. On the contrary, he preserves the positive and genuine aspects of his orthodox piety, discarding only the dogma and the prejudice which are plainly wrong and have led to tragic injustice. In light of this fact, Böttger's interpretation comes across as being rather extreme when he pronounces:

die Tragik ihrer Liebe beruht darauf, daß die weltanschaulichen Gegensätze und alle daraus folgenden Mißverständnisse in den weltanschaulichen Kämpfen der Zeit verankert sind, daß der Riß, der zwischen ihnen ist, durch die gesamte Nation geht und ein Ausgleich sich erst nach der historischen Niederlage der alten protestantischen Orthodoxie erwarten läßt. <sup>43</sup>

Although the force and implication of this argument is obscured by

the ambiguity surrounding the word "orthodoxy", it is not the overthrowing of traditional Protestant belief as such which is required in order for reconciliation to be reached in the *Novelle*, nor can this have been what Storm realistically envisaged for the future, much as he - or for that matter Böttger - may have liked to see it happen. Rather the *Novelle* has to do with the defeat of bigotry and of inhumanity, of blind prejudice and ruthless sectarianism, and it is demonstrated how these goals need not - and indeed should not - be incompatible with those of religious commitment.

Josias' exultant mood resulting from his transforming insight is, however, suddenly clouded by a full realisation of his personal responsibility for the anguish caused to Renate: "'O Gott der Gnaden', rief er, 'aus meiner Jugend tritt ein Engel auf mich zu; verwirf mich nicht ob meiner finsternen Schuld!'" (III, 136). Thus the sense of guilt, which before had been present only as a dark and undefined inkling, now comes forcefully to the centre of Josias' consciousness. His position is not unlike that of Hauke Haien, who in the face of death cries out into the storm: "Herr Gott, ja, ich bekenn es, . . . ich habe meines Amtes schlecht gewartet!" (IV, 368). This is precisely the nature of Josias' own guilt, for as a representative of the Christian Church he has failed to embody those values of justice, love and forgiveness which ought to have been the motivating factors in his behaviour. But the difference between the endings of the two *Novellen* is that Josias, unlike Hauke, does not die without first experiencing the appeasement of his conscience and the transformation of his state of inner tumult into one of peace and harmony. Elisabeth Muchitsch<sup>44</sup> describes the close of the story by way of an interesting comparison with Stifter:

In der *Novelle* "Renate" . . . entscheidet sich der Dichter für eine Lösung des Problems, die entfernt an das Wiederfinden der beiden leidgeprüften Menschen in Stifters "Brigitta" erinnert, vor allem aber von einem Gedanken getragen wird, wie ihn gerade Stifter als wirkendes Gesetz im Weltall anerkannte: "die reinigendste, die allerschönste Blume der Liebe, ist das Verzeihen".

45

As Muchitsch concedes, the parallel with *Brigitta* may be no more than a distant one, but certainly the concept of loving forgiveness and a reunion of spirits is the note on which the story is concluded as the narrator Andreas briefly relates how Renate secretly comes to visit Josias in his dying days and enables him at last to discover

peace of mind.

So by the gentle and conciliatory ending to this Novelle (in this respect similar to *Ein Doppelgänger*, which we will examine in the second half of the chapter), Storm chooses to avoid an uncompromisingly severe outcome to the tragedy. Instead he lightens the conclusion with a suggestion of hope and portrays something of the transformation which can be brought about when rationality and forbearance are allowed to take over from superstition and intolerance. Nonetheless, it would be inappropriate to label this a "happy ending"; rather the closing framework is a poignant and ironic one which serves to underline the tragedy of two lives needlessly wasted in unhappiness, denied the fulfilment they could have enjoyed together. The ruined potential of a lifetime can never be regained or compensated for by a few brief meetings at the last, and their reunion, for all the positive values that it affirms in both characters, is also a sad and painful reminder of what might have been. Moreover the peaceful death of Josias is not the end of the tale, for Renate herself must continue quietly to suffer her fate of loneliness and social ostracism for the rest of her life. The tragedy is therefore mellowed, but by no means is it cancelled.

Ingrid Schuster expresses the central question posed by the Novelle thus: "Inwieweit darf sich ein Individuum überhaupt von religiösen Dogmen leiten lassen, da die Geschichte zeigt, wie wenig diese auf sachlicher Erkenntnis beruhen?"<sup>46</sup>. Her reply to her own question is, "Die Novelle gibt darauf keine Antwort", and she suggests that the reader is left to draw his own conclusions. Although it is true that Storm does not blatantly impose a particular interpretation on his works, Schuster's comment seems to overlook the powerful impact of the tragedy in exposing the harmful error of the Church as well as the guilt of society in general. Far from leaving the question open or unanswered, *Renate* comes across as a forceful expression of Storm's hatred of inhumanity and as a plea for tolerance and enlightenment in a world marred by the manifestations of bigotry. We are reminded of the brief witch-burning scene in *Aquis submersus* which distresses Johannes deeply and prompts in him a prayer confessing to the fallen nature of mankind and the need for mercy and forgiveness:

O Herr, mein Gott und Christ,  
 Sei gnädig mit uns allen,  
 Die wir in Sünd gefallen,  
 Der du die Liebe bist! (II, 692)

Johannes, who himself knows what it is to be victimised, is well aware of the evil of social prejudice and its ruthless consequences, and his prayer conveys an acknowledgement of guilt on behalf of society which might equally have come from the lips of Josias following the moment of his conversion.

It is not only in another prose work, however, that the thematic content of *Renate* is mirrored or anticipated. Although parallels between Storm's verse and his later Novellen are not always immediately obvious, especially as far as specific social and religious criticism are concerned, a striking resemblance may be discerned, if not in subject-matter, then certainly in sentiment, between *Renate* and the poem *Crucifixus* (1865):

Am Kreuz hing sein gequält Gebeine,  
 Mit Blut besudelt und geschmählt;  
 Dann hat die stets jungfräulich reine  
 Natur das Schreckensbild verweht.

Doch die sich seine Jünger nannten,  
 Die formten es in Erz und Stein  
 Und stellten's in des Tempels Duster  
 Und in die lichte Flur hinein.

So, jedem reinen Aug ein Schauder,  
 Ragt es herein in unsre Zeit;  
 Verewigend den alten Frevel,  
 Ein Bild der Unversöhnlichkeit. (IV, 394) <sup>47</sup>

These verses are often quoted by critics in an attempt to shed light on the difficult issue of Storm's relationship to Christianity, but not always with great success. Stuckert, for example, writes:

Der antireligiöse, antichristliche Affekt Storms . . . hat dann seinen schärfsten, fast blasphemischen Ausdruck in dem Gedicht "Crucifixus" gefunden . . . Von der Grundlage eines ästhetisch sublimierten Naturalismus aus wird hier das christliche Symbol angegriffen als Verewigung des "alten Frevels", der darin besteht, daß der Zustand des Leidens und der Erniedrigung in Stein und Erz nachgebildet wird. <sup>48</sup>

But this interpretation of the "alten Frevels" in particular is misleading, since Stuckert overlooks the important fact that the poem was composed as an expression of Storm's sympathy for the Jewish people. The background to the poem is explained by Storm himself in the autobiographical tale *Der Amtschirurgus - Heimkehr* (1871):



. . . mein alter Freund [mein Freund, der jüdische Herrscher aus unserer Nachbarstadt]; ich kann nicht anders, als es dir in dein Grab nachsagen, worin du nun seit lange auf dem kleinen Judenkirchhof der Nachbarstadt ruhst, daß du meinem Vater gewiß gutes niederländisches Tuch zu den christlichsten Preisen verkauft hast. - Wer weiß, ob nicht die Freundlichkeit, die du dem Knaben einst erwiesest, den Keim jener Zuneigung gelegt hat, die ich deinem Volke stets bewahrte und die mir auch der schmutzigste Schacherjude nicht hat stören können. Habe ich doch aus jener Sympathie heraus noch vor wenigen Jahren die nachstehenden Verse gedichtet, welche freilich von meinem Freunde Alexander, da ich sie ihm noch warm aus dem Herzen vortrug, mit der kurzen Kritik: "Auch eine Auffassung!" ganz und für immer abgefertigt sind. (IV, 394 [insert IV, 393])

The meaning and impact of the poem hinges on the first line of the second stanza: "Doch die sich seine Jünger nannten". In other words, Storm's criticism is directed specifically against the Christian Church which, in adopting the cross as its central symbol and placing it in permanent public gaze, allows it to stand as "Ein Bild der Unversöhnlichkeit", as a constant reminder of the guilt of the Jews in having been responsible for the death of the Messiah and therefore as bearing the curse of God for ever. This hard-hitting outcry from Storm against the Church's lack of desire for reconciliation is recognised early by Alfred Biese who states: "Der Krucifixus erscheint ihm als Bild der Unversöhnlichkeit, indem die Christen den alten Frevel der Juden verewigen, den die "stets jungfräuliche Natur" vor Jahrtausenden verwehte"<sup>49</sup>, and Robert Pitrou writes in a similar manner of the "symbole d'une intransigence qui se refuse au pardon, d'une haine éternisée du chrétien contre le Juif"<sup>50</sup>.

The poem therefore clearly conveys Storm's very jaundiced view of the Church as an institution. His confirmation as a teenager must have made him aware of the true Christian attitude to the cross, namely as a symbol of love, sacrifice and of salvation, and of the belief that not in fact the Jews, but rather each sinful individual was to be seen as being responsible for the death of Christ. In later life, however, the extent to which he distances himself from orthodox teaching is revealed in this poem which portrays Christian values as being turned on their head and paints the Church as the wilful perpetrator of hatred and intolerance. Yet despite what may seem at first in the poem to be an exaggerated and unjustified level of hostility towards the Church, the striking relevance of Storm's

comment is illustrated by the events of history, of which the pogroms of the Second World War are only the most recent example. Fritz Rüdiger Sammern-Frankennegg highlights this truth in referring to "die ungeheuerliche Schuld des historischen Christentums, die darin liegt, das jüdische Volk in seiner Gesamtheit als Gottesmörder verflucht und durch 19 Jahrhunderte einem entsetzlichen Schicksal preisgegeben zu haben"<sup>51</sup>. Fritz Böttger's comment on *Crucifixus* is one which sums up the essence of Storm's position, and is appropriate in that it leads us back to our original investigation by being equally applicable to *Renate*:

Dieser Protest gründet . . . in seiner Menschenliebe; er ist unmittelbare Reaktion seines naiven Empfindens, Ausdruck seines lebhaften Mitfühlens mit allem Lebendigen und Impuls einer Barmherzigkeit, die den Menschen der Zukunft vor den Bildern der Grausamkeit einer glücklicherweise überwundenen Vergangenheit bewahrt sehen möchte.<sup>52</sup>

Thus the similarity in conviction between *Crucifixus* and *Renate* can clearly be recognised. In both cases Storm portrays the injustice as instigated by the dogma and prejudice of the Church and perpetuated (more especially in *Renate*) by "Christian" society in general. Although the subject-matter differs, the underlying theme is the same in both: the complaint against man's inhumanity to man, and the implicit plea for greater charity and forbearance.

As we have already noted in our earlier discussion of Storm's attitude to religion, his position was a humanistic one which aspired to noble ideals independently of personal faith or the strictures of the Church: "Ich habe auch ohne diesen Gottesglauben alles Schlechte in mir zu bekämpfen gesucht - Neid, Haß und Eifersucht, und mich bemüht, ein guter Mensch zu sein"<sup>53</sup>. Indeed he implies that this is a more mature and reasonable attitude to which others would do well to progress. Writing to his second wife Dorothea, who contrasted with him in her religious devoutness, he spared her the greatest venom of his criticism towards the Church, but nonetheless remained firm in his belief that unquestioning faith was an aspect of intellectual unripeness which needed to be overcome:

Du möchtest mich zu Deinem kindlichen Glauben führen, mein Do? Das wäre wohl gegen den natürlichen Lauf der Dinge. Aus dem Kinde kann wohl ein Mann werden, und freilich mitunter auch aus dem Manne ein Kind, wenn er in die dem Tode vorhergehende Altersschwäche versinkt. Sonst geht's wohl nicht, und diesen Kindeszustand wünschst Du mir auch noch nicht . . . Sei Du,

mein Do, ein Kind, so lange es Dir möglich und natürlich ist; ich zwingen Dich nicht; ich warte ruhig die Zeit ab, wo das Kind auch hierin mein ebenbürtiges Weib wird. <sup>54</sup>

The gentleness and respectfulness of this comment, however, coming just a few months before his marriage, conceals the full vehemence of Storm's censure of the insidious power of the Church within society, which, while being esteemed as the bastion of truth and sound morality, could be guilty in fact of crass manipulation and injustice. Such is the notion which he develops to deep tragic effect in *Renate*, for although Josias is not presented as being entirely without individual guilt, he is cleared of responsibility to a large extent because of the inexorability of the social and religious constraints upon him. The conciliatory closing picture of Josias' eventual release from the delusion and bigotry of the established Church is Storm's vision for the whole of society and continued to be relevant to his own contemporary setting, if not with regard to the specific issue of the witch-hunt, then to the problem of superstition and prejudice in general.

It is interesting that Joseph Hansen, writing some twenty years after the publication of Storm's *Renate*, closed his renowned work on the history of witchcraft with the expression of a sentiment closely related to Storm's own:

Von der Verantwortung für seine [des Hexenprozesses] Entstehung wird die Menschheit sich aber doch erst dann ganz entlastet fühlen können, wenn sie auch den kläglichen, noch nicht überwundenen Rest der ihm zu Grunde liegenden Wahnvorstellungen ausgeschieden haben wird, der trotz aller inneren Haltlosigkeit in den herrschenden religiösen Systemen noch heute sein Dasein fristet. <sup>55</sup>

Although this viewpoint is slightly narrow in that it fails to take account of the fact that superstition and sectarianism are not necessarily limited to religious systems as such, but rather are general social factors which express themselves in many contexts, the basic point which he makes is nonetheless a valid one. Hansen, the historian, and Storm, the artist, quite unknown to one another, both make the same fundamental assertion: although the age of witch-hunting in its literal form has passed and the modern "enlightened" observer may sanctimoniously shake his head in disgust on hearing of it, the narrow-mindedness and intolerance of man which initiated such activities in the first place are still much in

evidence today, and need to be replaced by the values of true humanitarianism if society is to be absolved from its perennial guilt and further tragedy is to be averted.

### Section B: *Ein Doppelgänger*

From the historical, middle-class setting of *Renate*, we proceed now to examine a tragic Novelle composed six years later which is radically different in subject matter, and exemplifies another aspect of Storm's work as a writer marked by genuine compassion and a keen sense of social justice. No chapter on the theme of social compulsion in Storm's tragic Novellen would be complete without some consideration of *Ein Doppelgänger* (1886), for it has been regarded by many as the most "modern" and most socially committed of all his works. "Die Welt ist gar zu kalt!" (IV, 182) are the poignant words of the old servant-woman Alt Mariken in the Novelle as she tries to console the shivering little daughter of the socially ostracised and poverty-stricken ex-convict John Hansen, and her comment pertinently sums up the overriding impression left by the work as a whole. Unlike any of his other Novellen, this story is set, as Storm puts it, "auf der untersten Stufe in der Kathe eines Arbeiters"<sup>56</sup>, and is an agonising, though at the same time carefully tempered tale of isolation and injustice suffered by Hansen and his family at the hands of a hostile and unforgiving community. Interpretations of the Novelle vary greatly, but its essence has perhaps best been captured by modern Storm scholarship in the words of T.J. Rogers who describes it as:

an uncompromising ethical stand on the side of humanitarian liberalism, a tone compounded of indignation and warm charity, and a message which pleads for a respectful and tolerant understanding of the capacities of each single person as an exemplar of the human spirit.<sup>57</sup>

Storm's unusual choice of a working-class setting for *Ein Doppelgänger* not surprisingly has made the question of the contemporary sociological or political relevance of the work a subject of much debate, and we will return to this matter presently. Fritz Böttger, however, employs a discerning approach which dispenses with unnecessary controversy and is consistent with the picture which we have already built up of Storm. He writes: "das Problem, das der Dichter anschneidet, stammt mehr aus dem Erlebniskreis des Juristen als dem des Soziologen"<sup>58</sup>. As has been demonstrated in Chapter One, Storm's many years of involvement with judicial cases greatly increased his understanding of human behaviour and social

pressures and sharpened his perception of the potential for tragedy in everyday life. His letters and diaries are full of accounts and anecdotes from his legal career, and it is clear that so much direct contact with situations of conflict and struggle between the individual and the community, of social injustice and personal suffering, deeply marked his psyche. It was, however, not until 1866, six years after his retirement, that the insight gained by a lifetime of experience in the social and criminological realm was given its most forceful literary expression in a *Novelle*. The story was inspired by the tale told to him by his aunt of the "etwas unheimlichen Tod eines Husumer Menschen"<sup>59</sup>, and he was immediately fired with such enthusiasm for a new plot developing in his mind that he set aside for the time being the work he had already begun on *Ein Bekenntnis* and *Der Schimmelreiter*. The main events of the story are as follows.

In the opening framework the narrator makes the acquaintance of a head forester at an inn near Jena, and is invited to stay at his home. There he meets the forester's wife Christine, who comes from the same town as the narrator in the north of Germany, but whom he cannot at first remember from his youth there. The forester explains to their guest in private that his wife's father had been known locally not by his real name Hansen, but by the name "Glückstadt" from the prison where he had served six years for his part in a violent crime. Christine later relates how she was orphaned at an early age, and tells sadly of the two conflicting images which she retains of her father, one of a wild and angry man who had beaten her mother, and the other of a gentle and caring protector . . . The central section which follows is the story of John Hansen, Christine's father, the details of which flood into the consciousness of the narrator while he is "in halbvisionärem Zustande". When John as a young man completes his military service, he is unable to find employment, and for the sake of adventure takes part in a violent robbery for which he is imprisoned. Dubbed "John Glückstadt" after his release, he finds himself faced with public suspicion and social ostracism, but finally manages to find employment as a field supervisor in charge of women working on a chicory farm. Here he meets his future wife Hanna, whom he saves from running into an open well, and he asks his employer to have the dangerous place

fenced off. John works hard, marries and has a daughter, and in spite of public malice manages to attain a modicum of contentedness and respectability in his little home. After the death of his employer, however, due to the pitilessness of his fellow man in refusing him further full-time work, he is reduced to taking odd jobs. His financial situation worsens, and his sense of degradation gradually increases, leading to violent moods and domestic discord, and eventually to the unintentional killing of his wife in a fit of rage. Left alone and heartbroken with his child, he directs all his energy into caring for her, and to prevent her from freezing in the bitter cold one Christmas Eve, steals the wooden fence from around the well to make a fire. John is later pursued by his former accomplice Wenzel, and although he spurns him forcibly, the two are seen together by a gendarme whose slurring comments increase public suspicion and effectively block John's chances of further work. In the end, isolated with his daughter and at the point of starvation, he is forced again into a criminal act. Stealing potatoes from a field, he stumbles in the darkness into the same well which he had earlier stripped of its protection, and the mystery of his disappearance is never solved . . . The closing framework reveals how Christine, having at last been told the complete story, is able to reconcile the two images which she has had of her father, and to make peace with the perplexing memories of the past which have clouded her full happiness for so long.

Storm was unsure as to what the reaction of the literary world to his latest offering would be. In a letter to Erich Schmidt shortly before completing the work he described it as a "Wagstück" and proceeded to express something of his doubts concerning it: "ich bin über die Berechtigung des Ganzen etwas in Zweifel gerathen. Die Hauptperson ist ein Arbeiter, ein junger Züchtling"<sup>60</sup>. He displayed similar hesitation regarding this move into a new kind of territory when he wrote to his friend Paul Heyse. Referring together to *Ein Doppelgänger* and *Bötjër Basch*, since he intended to join the two in one volume under the title *Bei kleinen Leuten*, he wrote: "Ich zweifle, ob sie Dir was abgewinnen werden"<sup>61</sup>. Almost as if in confirmation of Storm's fears, Heyse had no comment to make on *Ein Doppelgänger*, and this indeed was the case with all of Storm's personal friends except for a brief word of general appreciation from Schmidt<sup>62</sup>. The

lack of enthusiasm on the part of Storm's closer circle of contacts, however, was to be more than compensated for by the wider group of literary commentators who, both at the time and in more recent Storm scholarship, have been impressed by the work and taken it seriously. Two warring sides of critical opinion quickly sprang up in response to the *Novelle*: there were those, led mainly by Johannes Wedde and supported later by Robert Pitrou, who were keen to read into it a severe castigation of the established social order, a tendentious work of political protest and class struggle calculated to advance the proletarian cause. Others, however, following in the footsteps of Alfred Biese, were more interested in coming to grips with the deeper artistic and humanitarian aspects of the work. Knowing, as has been established in Chapter One, that Storm's outlook was basically unpolitical and his creative writing centred primarily on the psychology of the individual grappling with a tragic fate, they sought to avoid any Naturalist interpretation. Stuckert, for example, strikes a reasonable balance when he writes: "Ihn [Storm] beschäftigt ausschließlich das menschliche Problem, wobei der sozialkritische Ton nur beiläufig - allerdings unüberhörbar - anklingt"<sup>63</sup>. The following examination of *Ein Doppelgänger* will take account of these two differing strands of interpretation. Firstly we will address the much debated issue of the work's political significance or lack of it, and then we will proceed to consider the more important subject of the approach and impact of the *Novelle* as a timeless tragedy of social ostracism.

### B.1 The Critical Debate

"Die Arbeit gehört, trotz ihrer relativ raschen Entstehung, zu seinen besten"<sup>64</sup>. Such was the verdict of Karl Emil Franzos, whose new periodical *Deutsche Dichtung* was launched in the autumn of 1886, featuring Storm's *Ein Doppelgänger* in six instalments. Despite the generosity of Franzos' commendation, however, the tale would be unlikely to rank today among the top few most popular or successful of Storm's tragic *Novellen*. This is probably in some part due to the ambiguity surrounding Storm's political intentions in choosing to portray the plight of a working-class hero. A long-running debate has centered on this subject, producing a succession of interpretations largely preoccupied with the same issue, and the



result of this has been that other considerations such as the artistic unity and tragic impact of the work as a whole have been obscured. The one-sided approach of the literary commentators has blinded them to the distinctive merit of this work set in a social context untypical of Storm, and consequently it has been relegated to the position of what Eckart Pastor has recently called an "eben doch gescheitertes Wagstück"<sup>65</sup>.

In a short book entitled *Theodor Storm. Einige Züge zu seinem Bilde*, it was the socialist writer Johannes Wedde who in 1888 published the memorable and outspoken analysis of *Ein Doppelgänger* which critics have been at pains either to reject or to support ever since. Wedde interpreted the Novelle as "einen schneidigen Protest" against social conditions which lead to the exclusion and tragic destruction of helpless individuals such as John Hansen, and praised Storm's accomplishment in portraying the arrogance and self-righteousness of the middle classes in contrast to the integrity and perseverance of the proletariat. Referring to *Ein Doppelgänger* and *Bötjer Basch* as a pair, he wrote:

Sie sollen uns den Werth und die Tüchtigkeit der sogenannten "kleinen Leute", des vom dummen Hochmuth so oft gering geschätzten gemeinen Volkes, zu Herzen führen, sollen uns veranschaulichen, auf welcher Grundfeste der Bau der Zukunft aufgeführt werden muß.<sup>66</sup>

Wedde therefore clearly regarded Storm to be a champion of the workers' cause making a clear appeal for social reform, and moreover his description renders the impression that the work bore greater resemblance to a product of Naturalism than of Poetic Realism: "Vertuscht und überzuckert wird hier gar nichts. Die ganze Noth der Wirklichkeit von 1887 und 1888 schreit aus diesem . . . mit klassischer Meisterschaft ausgeführten Zeitbilde uns entgegen"<sup>67</sup>. Unlike many early evaluations of Storm's work which soon faded into obscurity, Wedde's incisive words have proved imperishable, being quoted at length by succeeding generations of critics. Even Vinçon has little comment of his own to add, praising Wedde's interpretation as "eine treffende Zusammenfassung der Novelle"<sup>68</sup>.

Storm's reaction to Wedde's analysis was an interesting one. Although he could not agree fully with its implications, he was plainly gratified to note that issues which were of importance to him

were at last being registered and reflected upon by his readers:

Zwar kann ich nicht überall mit Ihnen gehen und darf auch nicht zu hoffen wagen, was Sie als eine spätere Wirkung meiner Dichtung aufstellen; aber Sie haben einzelnes, was auch mir von Bedeutung erschienen, hervorgehoben, dem man bisher vorbeigegangen ist. <sup>69</sup>

We have already noted Storm's strong sense of social justice and his sensitive and caring attitude to those less fortunate than himself. A practical demonstration of this was his decision that the total proceeds from his seventieth birthday celebrations should be used to establish an aid fund for the poor, whereby the annual interest from the investment was to be donated to a needy family from the working class<sup>70</sup>. This kind of social awareness can be traced back throughout his career, a genuine concern manifesting itself again and again when he witnessed situations which shocked or deeply moved him. A striking insight into Storm's first encounter with grinding rural poverty is afforded in a letter dating from his stay in Heiligenstadt, in which he conveys to a friend in Potsdam a candid admission of his previous ignorance concerning the daily hardship endured by many:

Von dem knappen Leben dieser armen Leute aus den Gebirgsdörfern hat Unsereins bisher keine Vorstellung gehabt, dafür daß sie ihren Kartoffelbedarf auf dem Lande eines Bauern aussäen, arbeitet die ganze Familie den Sommer über, dieß Jahr für 13 Sack; wenn sie trocken Brot haben sind sie vergnügt, als Luxusartikel zu ihren Speisen haben sie den Winter über 1 Pf. Schmalz gebraucht; der Tagelohn, wenn sie ja einen verdienen können, ist 2½ Silbergroschen. <sup>71</sup>

Storm was well aware of the difficulties and tension caused by such austere living conditions, and had seen many individuals pass through the courts whose cases were pitiful examples of extreme deprivation resulting in crime. But it is misleading to suggest, as Pitrou does, that Storm expresses through *Ein Doppelgänger* "une protestation franche et nullement édulcorée contre une société qui laisse rouler à l'abîme des forces populaires nobles et précieuses"<sup>72</sup>, for this implies that the *Novelle* can be reduced to a single, unambiguous political statement. Such a notion, as has been demonstrated in Chapter Two, is incompatible with Storm's conception of art, and moreover a careful reading of the *Novelle* reveals that good and bad can be seen in all layers of society. Storm's verification that Wedde had rightly identified "was auch mir von Bedeutung erschienen" must be seen to refer to Wedde's recognition

of the general social ills which motivate the tragedy, the evils of prejudice and insensitivity, of "Beschränktheit und Unsittlichkeit" which Storm had condemned before. But given Storm's adamant dislike of the Naturalist approach, we may assume that his hesitation in going along fully with Wedde's interpretation stems at least partly from the latter's tendency to separate the *Novelle* from its context within Poetic Realism and acclaim it as trenchant and unqualified social protest.

The other commentator to undertake a serious analysis of *Ein Doppelgänger* shortly after its publication was Alfred Biese. Although his approach is fundamentally different from that of Wedde, there is a striking similarity in the notions presented by the two men with respect to the correspondence with Naturalism. Biese writes:

In armseliger Hütte spielt sich die *Novelle* ab; ich kenne nur Zola's *Germinal*, das mit ähnlich ergreifender Naturwahrheit - denn das ist Naturalismus im edlen Sinne! - das Fühlen und Denken dieser unteren, oft so bedauernswerthen Menschenschicht schildert.<sup>73</sup>

As we already know from our discussion in Chapter Two concerning the relation of Storm's depiction of tragic reality to that of the Naturalist writers, this is not the only occasion on which Biese draws a parallel between Storm and Zola. Eckart Pastor in his chapter on *Ein Doppelgänger* points out that while Storm might not have been entirely happy with Biese's comment - the differences between *Ein Doppelgänger* and *Germinal* being of greater significance than the similarities<sup>74</sup> - nonetheless the *Novelle* displays certain features which are untypical of Storm's later work. John's relationship with Hanna, Pastor notes, is described in language full of the vocabulary of sexual passion, and the portrayal of their characters and behaviour in general employs the frequent repetition of such words as "wüst" and "wild". While he omits to qualify this by mentioning that these words are in fact widely used in the late *Novellen*, Pastor draws together many examples from *Ein Doppelgänger*, and successfully demonstrates that claims of at least some links with the style of Naturalism can be substantiated: "kein Zweifel, sie [John und Hanna] sind dem Erzähler weniger Einzelfall, individueller Charakter, denn typische Ausprägung der species Mensch auf einer bestimmten Stufe der Gesellschaft"<sup>75</sup>. Yet although this assertion may contain an element of truth, it cannot convincingly be maintained that Storm

paints John Hansen as a type rather than as an individual. On the contrary, it is with John's private struggle with his fate that Storm is primarily concerned. The Novelle conveys little insight into the detailed reality of proletarian existence, the physical hardship of long, heavy hours of toil for meagre reward and the sheer wretchedness of the living and working conditions. *Ein Doppelgänger* is the story of a poor man's dejection as a result of unemployment and social ostracism, rather than a Naturalist treatment of the misery and injustice suffered by the working classes in general. This point is further clarified by Peter Goldammer who writes:

Das Leben und Denken der Arbeiter war Storm fremd, und gar der Kampf des Proletariats um die revolutionäre Veränderung der Welt lag gänzlich außerhalb seines Erfahrungsbereichs. Vom Kampf der Klassen als eines die Geschichte bestimmenden Gesetzes wußte er nichts. Humane bürgerliche Gesittung und Gesinnung einer vergangenen Epoche waren die Maßstäbe, nach denen er die Erscheinungen der im Entstehen begriffenen imperialistischen Welt beurteilte und richtete. (I, 92 f.)

Despite the fact that Goldammer devotes much of the space in his commentary on *Ein Doppelgänger* to a lengthy quotation from Wedde, even giving him the last word on the matter (IV, 644), he reveals in his general introduction to the edition that he cannot share Wedde's view of the work as a "schneidigen Protest" against contemporary social conditions. Rather he asserts: "nicht unter gesellschaftlichen, sondern allein unter ethischen Aspekten betrachtet er [Storm] das Problem" (I, 92), and this is the position which is shared by the majority of commentators. Even Schuster, while maintaining that a degree of social criticism is implicit in the work, agrees with Böttger that Storm approaches the issues from the point of view of the lawyer interested in the psychological motivation of the conflict, rather than as one who wishes to draw attention to or complain against economic problems as such. She writes:

er prangert nicht das ökonomische System, sondern die Grausamkeit und Selbstgerechtigkeit der Gesellschaft an. Zwar geht er nicht so weit, eine "Resozialisierung" ehemaliger Häftlinge im modernen Sinn zu fordern, doch ist seine Kritik deutlich genug.<sup>76</sup>

The greatest stumbling-block to critics in their evaluation of the level of political protest contained in the Novelle lies in the framework. The gentle, idealised picture which it paints of middle-class security and contentment is far removed from the harsh

reality of the central tale, and for many commentators its sickly-sweetness sits uncomfortably alongside a disturbing tragedy of ruthless social ostracism. Pastor sums up this predominant critical reaction: "Der Rahmen, sonst eine der Stärken Stormschen Erzählens, ist, sagt man, von der Binnenerzählung durch eine Kluft getrennt - hie bürgerliches Stilleben, dort proletarisches Sozialstück, beide unvereinbar miteinander"<sup>77</sup>, and consequently, according to many, it is to this essential flaw in the work that its lack of outstanding success may be attributed. Fritz Martini is quite categorical when he states: "Der soziale Konflikt 'versumpft' im Gefühlvollen und Rührenden. Die Idylle hebt die Tragödie auf."<sup>78</sup>, and it has not been until relatively recently that this view has been challenged and an attempt has been made to re-evaluate the significance of the framework and acknowledge the unity of the *Novelle* as a whole. Heinz-Peter Niewerth, for example, has called attention to the striking fact that the framework runs to half the length of the central narrative, a proportion unmatched in any other *Novelle*, and suggested that this is significant in helping to soften the effect of a tragic conflict which is unusually severe<sup>79</sup>. Manfred Schunicht, having examined this issue in some detail, concludes: "Der Versuch, Poesie als erstrebte Alternative zu einer negativ bewerteten sozialen Wirklichkeit sichtbar zu machen, bildet die eigentliche Intention des Rahmens"<sup>80</sup>, and he asserts that the framework offers an apt and essential complement to the ruthlessness of the central tale.

Thus critical opinion regarding the function of the framework in *Ein Doppelgänger* is seen to come full circle in the space of a century. Biese had appreciated the manner in which the work is enveloped in the "goldenem Schimmer der Poesie und der Humanität"<sup>81</sup>, yet this was the major feature subsequently scorned by others as a weakness or as an "angehäuften schwachen Ausklang"<sup>82</sup>, as Coghlan has it. Eventually, however, this tempering technique has come to be recognised as one of the *Novelle's* surpassing strengths, for it offsets any obtrusiveness of social criticism and keeps the work firmly within Storm's realm of Poetic Realism. Bollenbeck has recently summed up the matter thus:

Solches Nebeneinander von erbarmungsloser Gesellschaft und beruhigendem Bürgerglück läßt sich nicht als abgeschwächte Sozialkritik verstehen, jedenfalls nicht aus der Sicht Storms. Die *Novelle* mag so wirken. Sie erhält aber vom Autor, der sich nie

als Sozialkritiker empfand, ihren beschönigenden Rahmen, weil ihm die erzählte Wirklichkeit für seine Vorstellung von Dichtung zu roh ist.<sup>83</sup>

In aiming to reach an objective conclusion after considering the abundance of varying opinions on the presence or absence of specific political intentions in *Ein Doppelgänger*, it is helpful to turn to the comments made by the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, a younger man whose friendship Storm enjoyed during his latter years. Tönnies' major work *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* was published in 1887, just a short time after Storm's *Ein Doppelgänger*, and the memories of Storm which he recorded as his contribution to the hundredth birthday celebrations in 1917 furnish us with a valuable insight into the author's thinking. "Auch den sozialen Fragen wandte Storm gern seine Aufmerksamkeit zu"<sup>84</sup>, writes Tönnies, but he also makes it clear that Storm was a democrat "mehr im ethischen als politischen Verstande"<sup>85</sup>, and that the detailed discussions in which they engaged on the subjects of democracy and socialism were approached on Storm's part "mit der Sympathie eines Menschenfreundes, der kein Politiker sein wollte"<sup>86</sup>. These concise comments constitute the most appropriate reply to critics such as Wedde and Pitrou, and help to place in proper perspective any question regarding the degree of overt social criticism contained in the Novelle. It is important also to remember that while *Ein Doppelgänger* is a fully rounded and self-contained work of art, Storm clearly regarded it as a complement to his previous Novelle *Bötjer Basch*, and the fact that he arranged for the two to be published in one volume under the title *Bei kleinen Leuten* is significant. In both tales the role of a small and united community is the decisive factor in determining the fate of a despairing individual. Daniel Basch the cooper sinks into heartbreak and isolation through a series of personal misfortunes, but is rescued at the moment of attempted suicide by the indomitable solidarity and practical intervention of society. John Hansen the ex-convict, however, also to a large extent the victim of circumstances, is denied that outstretched hand of fellowship which only the community can give him and is faced instead with a serried rank of enemy forces which by their prejudice and insensitivity drive him ultimately into tragic ruin. The two works therefore belong together as contrasting artistic treatments of the potential influence of society on the

fortunes of its individual members. *Ein Doppelgänger* represents but one side of the coin, and is most fruitfully examined with this context in mind, for thereby the tendency to unbalanced interpretation under which the Novelle has suffered in the past may best be avoided.

## B.2 The Tragedy of Social Ostracism

Despite the disparity in critical opinion concerning the contemporary relevance and implications of *Ein Doppelgänger*, few would disagree that the Novelle testifies to the convictions of a committed humanitarian who believed firmly in the dignity and inherent worth of the individual. The work constitutes a poignant artistic treatment of a perennial problem encountered by Storm in his legal career, namely the manner in which inimical social factors such as unemployment, exploitation or opposition can threaten the personality, undermining self-esteem and moral control and resulting often in misdemeanour, despair and ruin. The basic problem which sparks off the entire series of events in *Ein Doppelgänger* is that of unemployment. John Hansen commits his crime not out of greed or criminal perversity, but out of a spirit of adventure and daring - pent-up, youthful energy which ought rightly to have found its outlet in work. "Spaß sollte dabeisein" (IV, 151) - such was John's primary concern in his unbearable tedium, and even those in authority in the community feel a degree of sympathy for him after the deed is done, realising that the offence was perpetrated "weniger um den Gewinn als um den Sport dabei" (IV, 152). His crime, however, in all its boyish "innocence", violates the rule of social order and is disastrous in its consequences. He fully pays the price in legal terms, but his firm resolve to "go straight" and to work hard after returning from prison are futile since in the eyes of society he is marked for ever by his guilt. The Novelle depicts the terrible struggle of the individual who, both materially and spiritually, is incapable of survival outside the embrace of the community, and tells how for John Hansen society, driven by a mixture of fear, hatred and simple lack of understanding, by cutting him off in self-defence, turns into a frightening force which at length annihilates him.

The tragic irony of John's situation lies in the fact that, even at

the very beginning, he never intends to offend against the ethos of society. By giving away the stolen gold watch as a confirmation present - the guileless act which results in his own arrest - he shows himself to be conforming to the goals and values of a middle-class community; and in the later period after his imprisonment the sole issue which torments and obsesses him is how he is to become an accepted and respected citizen again: "Wie find ich meine verspielte Ehre wieder?" (IV, 158) is his agonising question to which there seems to be no answer. He is constantly confronted by the great gulf between what he desires to be, and what in reality he has been forced to become, and as this gulf widens the tale takes on a despairing sense of *impasse* and impending doom:

Immer feindlicher stand ihm die Welt entgegen; wo er ihrer bedurfte, wo er sie ansprach, immer hörte er den Vorwurf seiner jungen Schande als die Antwort. (IV, 162)

The John Hansen who emerges from prison is a chastened and sober character whose earlier immaturity and undisciplined vigour have been replaced by an obstinate and almost aggressive determination to find honest work and reintegrate into society. His inner tension, however, is manifested in a dark, brooding look in his eyes, and this serves to make potential employers suspicious of him and to feel ill at ease in his presence. Knowing his background, and fearing the possibility of relapse, they refuse him employment: "man wollte den Zuchthäusler nicht . . . 'Der Mensch sieht gefährlich aus', hieß es, 'Ich möchte in der Nacht ihm nicht allein begegnen!'" (IV, 152). Even when eventually he is successful in finding a job and furthermore by marrying demonstrates to the community his desire to settle down and to shoulder responsibility, still he is distrusted and shunned. A simple request from John at a local dance that a fellow worker should help him move a table meets with cold rebuff, and the man's reply to a friend who asks him what John wanted is typical of the attitude shown to him by the community at large: "Ich weiß nicht; ich sollt ihm helfen! Mag er sich selber helfen!" (IV, 157).

John is despised not only by the workers, who later exclude him from a celebration, but also by the middle classes, represented by the midwife who displays cool indifference and callously refuses to hurry when his wife is in labour. After the death of his employer, when work is available for him only on an irregular basis, the daily



humiliation inflicted on him through the double scourge of poverty and lack of responsibility gradually begins to take its toll on his family life. An inclination to violent outbursts of temper is John's one fault; this is already evident during his military service when he has to be restrained from assaulting a Danish captain who has insulted him, and it surfaces again when one day an insolent sailor touches an old wound by calling up his wife's past as a "Betteldirne", and John responds in the only way he knows, namely with brute force. As the tension within him increases through financial worries, outside insults and social isolation, the atmosphere in his home becomes strained and he begins to reply to his wife's complaints by raising his hand against her. Yet even the scenes of domestic discord are on each occasion resolved and peace and happiness are restored. When a new section of the *Novelle* begins with the words: "Trotz Not und Schuld wardie enge Kate noch immer sein Heim und seine Burg" (IV, 167), the reader is almost lulled into a false sense of security by this picture of apparent contentedness and protection. The frequently repeated use of the word "noch" throughout the early part of the narrative, however, casts a shadow of doubt on the stability of John's situation and suggests the idea of impending disaster which may at first be delayed by a honeymoon period of harmony and well-being, but cannot ultimately be averted. Through this one word Storm subtly paves the way for an imminent catastrophe within the family which will radically influence the future course of events.

The inevitable moment of calamity, when John in an outburst of rage hurls his wife against the stove with fatal consequences, is triggered by a heated dispute in the course of which each drags up the memory of the other's former degradation. Arguing over ways to improve their alarming financial situation, John refers with scorn to Hanna's begging when she was a child, asking her contemptuously: "Und schämtest du dich nicht?", and she in retaliation mercilessly reminds him of the shame of his own past by suggesting: "Wir können Wolle spinnen; das hast du ja sechs Jahre lang getrieben" (IV, 169). John has already been driven almost to breaking-point by the soul-destroying awareness which the rest of the community has inflicted on him of his "unsühnbare Schuld" (IV, 162), but now when his wife, the only person on whom he relies for unconditional love

and support, temporarily loses patience and betrays his trust, this additional blow to his self-respect is more than his volatile temperament can bear. In this fatal scene Storm poignantly reiterates the theme of the tragic disintegration of the family unit as the relentless pressure exerted by inimical outside forces strains the inner resources of those dependent on each other, leading to the breakdown of meaningful communication and culminating at length in violence, death and despair.

After the death of his wife, John's situation improves temporarily as people out of pity offer him more work. The old woman "Küster-Mariken" comes to help care for his child, and the three find a measure of peace and happiness together. Christine is distracted from her hunger pangs by the stories of her new companion and by the exciting challenge of learning to read and write, and even the meagre meals which she shares with her father are eaten in an almost idyllic atmosphere of harmony and companionship. This is the time which is imprinted on her memory as being the "Rosenzeit" of her childhood (IV, 177), the time when her father's love for her shone through most clearly. But even this calm interlude in the story is interrupted by reminders of John's agony in his haunting dreams and desperate prayers. His child is the only human being he can talk to, and his searing loneliness is underscored in the words: "was sie verstand oder nicht verstand, das flüsterte er in die kleinen Ohren; er hatte keinen andern Vertrauten, und ein ewig Schweigen soll kein Mensch ertragen können" (IV, 179). Eventually, the unmitigated harshness of reality destroys anything which remains of John's gentle family idyll. The reappearance of Wenzel, his former accomplice, sparks off renewed fear and suspicion within the community, and work becomes impossible to find. In his isolation and distress, John is reduced to asking Christine if she would be willing to go begging, but she in her honest simplicity cannot comprehend this uncharacteristic change of attitude: "Vater, warum fragst du so? Du sagtest immer, Betteln sei eine Schande!" His painful reply: "Es kann auch kommen, daß Schande noch nicht das Schlimmste ist" (IV, 187), indicates the extent of his desperation, but nonetheless he later retracts his words and refuses to allow his child to suffer such humiliation.

Ultimately John is driven to stealing potatoes from a field in order to avoid starvation, and in the darkness he meets his death by stumbling into the well which he has earlier stripped of its wooden fence to make a fire for his child at Christmas. This tragic ending to the story is prefaced by a distraught and agonising prayer: "Ich kann nicht, lieber Gott! Mein Kind! Es soll ans Kreuz geschlagen werden; laß mich es retten; ich bin ja nur ein Mensch!" (IV, 189), a final outcry through which Storm poignantly brings across the wretchedness and irreversibility of John's fate. Niewerth describes the pattern of events as culminating here "in einem ohnmächtigen Appell and Gott - oder in einem Appell an den ohnmächtigen Gott?"<sup>87</sup>, and indeed he is not the only commentator to touch on the religious aspects of the tale. Just as Gerhard Kaiser in his psychoanalytical interpretation of *Aquis submersus* writes of "die schmerzende Leerstelle" in Storm's view of the world, "wo der christliche Vatergott herausgefallen ist"<sup>88</sup> and treats the central figure Johannes as an antithetical John the Baptist, similarly Eckart Pastor, inspired by this approach, examines the character of John in *Ein Doppelgänger* as a contrast to his biblical namesake. He describes him as:

ein Anti-Johannes . . . dem eine Bußtaufe zur Vergebung der Sünden verweigert ist, dem, anders als dem biblischen Täufer bei der Taufe Christi, der Himmel verschlossen bleibt, dem kein Erlöser erscheint und dessen Weg nicht ins himmlische Jerusalem führt, sondern der von Glückstadt, seinem Strafort, nicht loskommt.

Changing the parallel, he continues: "Wie Kain, der alttestamentarische Verworfenen, irrt der Sünder John, verfolgt von seinem Gewissen, in seinen Untergang"<sup>89</sup>. Though these comparisons may capture something of the helpless extremity of John's tragic situation, nonetheless they must be seen as somewhat far-fetched and remote from Storm's original conception. Rather more pragmatic is Wolfgang Tschorn's diagnosis of John's dilemma when he writes: "So können seine Versuche, sich 'normal' zu verhalten nur scheitern durch die Notwendigkeit, zu überleben"<sup>90</sup>. This short sentence expresses the essence of John's plight, implacably spurned as he is by society in his search for identity, denied the possibility of reintegration through the community's suspicion and lack of willingness to forgive, and driven inescapably to crime which results in death. His fate is summed up by the mayor in the words:

Nachdem dieser John von Rechtes wegen seine Strafe abgebußt hatte, wurde er, wie gebräuchlich, der lieben Mitwelt zur Hetzjagd überlassen. Und sie hat ihn nun auch zu Tode gehetzt; denn sie ist ohn Erbarmen. (IV, 191)

Throughout the story the mayor stands out as representing the values of tolerance and enlightenment in a community where his words fall on deaf ears. Earlier he tries to quell the insinuations of the gendarme who has seen John in the company of his former accomplice by insisting that John is now "ein reputierlicher Mensch, der sich und seine Kleine ehrlich durchzubringen sucht" (IV, 185). The level of obduracy, however, with which the mayor has to contend is highlighted in the subsequent actions of the gendarme who is so annoyed by this rejection of his hypothesis that he sets out with even greater determination spitefully to spread his evil story through the entire town. Any attempt to tackle such deep-seated problems of prejudice and discrimination therefore far exceeds the scope of the mayor's official role; he speaks with the wisdom of a sympathetic onlooker, but his comments constitute a personal opinion rather than an official statement, and they are powerless to change the sentiments or behaviour of his fellow citizens.

Thus Storm poignantly places the larger part of the blame for John Hansen's undoing as being carried by a society whose inhumanity through its pitiless undermining of his honest attempts at atonement and reconciliation drive him to despair and ruin. He is not depicted as being entirely without fault, but Storm's tone is nevertheless one of genuine pity and understanding for the plight of the individual who struggles helplessly against a tragic fate operating through the ignorance and ruthless intolerance of his fellow man. The essence of the tragedy is formulated well by Alfred Biese:

Vor allem ist die Novelle durchweht von dem Geist echter Humanität. Das Schicksal ist wohl oft hart gegen den Menschen, aber am härtesten ist doch der Mensch gegen den Menschen. Der Eine vergiftet und vernichtet des Anderen Leben - anstatt zu vergeben und zu vergessen. Es liegt eine wahre, tiefe Tragik herein. Was hätte aus John Glückstadt werden können, wenn ihn das Leben anders gebildet, wenn ihn die Welt anders behandelt hätte - so treibt ihn das Verhängnis von Stufe zu Stufe. Er büßt eigene und - Anderer Schuld. 91

The question posed here by Biese as to what would have become of

John "wenn ihn das Leben anders gebildet, wenn ihn die Welt anders behandelt hätte" is strikingly reminiscent of some words of Storm which we considered in Chapter One. In a letter of 10.10.1863 to Constanze concerning his reaction to a petty criminal who had appeared before the court that day he had written:

' Der Mann interessierte mich. Es war etwas in seiner kraftvollen Erscheinung, daß ich immer daran denken mußte, den haben die Verhältnisse auf diesen Platz gebracht. Etwas Sonnenschein zur rechten Zeit hätte vielleicht eine sehr edle Menschenpflanze zur Erscheinung gebracht. <sup>92</sup>

This letter, which Biese could not have read, demonstrates the perceptiveness and pertinence of his comments on *Ein Doppelgänger*. Karl Emil Franzos moreover, the editor who had first commissioned the work and was in regular contact with Storm during the period of its composition, further corroborates this point in asserting that Biese's judgement corresponds much more closely to Storm's original purpose and artistic approach than the interpretation of Wedde who is guilty of the "Versuch, dem Dichter Absichten unterzuschieben, die ihm sicherlich fern gelegen"<sup>93</sup>.

If we consider all aspects of the Novelle in seeking an interpretation of the tragedy, however, we encounter a recurring shift in emphasis between the guilt of society in causing John's ruin and a reminder of the fateful determinism in life which is suggested by repeated occurrences concerning the well, and which pushes aside the problem of guilt. "Der Brunnen" was in fact the title which Storm had originally envisaged for the Novelle, and the well runs as a leitmotif throughout the work. Even the narrator's first mention of it produces a feeling of dark foreboding when he describes it as "ein verlassener Brunnen mit vermorschtem Plankwerk, der . . . auf einem weiten Felde lag, wo vorzeiten ein Haus, eine Schinderkate, sollte gestanden haben" (IV, 148). A sinister tone is introduced when we learn that it is in this very field containing the well that John spends his working hours, for as the former abode of the knacker the area has an uncanny stigma attached to it. The "Schinder" or "Abdecker" was often responsible, apart from the slaughtering of animals, for aiding the executioner, and his duties included such tasks as the erection of the gallows and subsequent removal of the corpses. Work of this kind was regarded as sordid and disreputable, and even into the nineteenth century these people were excluded

from the community and forced to live in isolation from it. This is therefore no ordinary disused well, but rather one associated with the practitioner of a trade which revolved around pain and death and situated in a place which was steeped in ancient taboo<sup>94</sup>. The well has a mysteriously disturbing effect upon John, causing him one day to stop, unable to pass it by, and listen intently, "als ob die Tiefe ein furchtbares Geheimnis berge" (IV, 156). No longer is it a source of life-giving water, but instead, as John mutters uneasily after throwing a stone down into its murky depths, "Gott mag wissen, was da unten liegt, . . . Wasser nicht, vielleicht nur Kröten und Unzeug" (IV, 154). References to the well are subtly built into the tale at decisive points, so that it assumes ever-increasing significance as the story unfolds. It is beside the well that he first meets his future wife Hanna, and the fact that she comes so close to being swallowed up by it troubles him deeply. "Warum lachst du nicht?", she asks him later in exultant mood; "Ich weiß nicht", he replies darkly, "- der Brunnen! . . . Ich wollt', er wäre aus der Welt!" (IV, 156). John ensures that the well is properly fenced off the following day, and yet he discovers that even this cannot entirely obliterate the lurking threat which it holds. On the occasion of their first major argument when Hanna rushes in despair from the house it is immediately to the well with its terrifying potential that his thoughts are directed, and the reader is reminded of the irony of his earlier words to her, "Nun, Dirne . . . sollten wir beide in den Brunnen? Es wäre vielleicht das Beste!" (IV, 155).

Throughout the remainder of the story the well continues to function as the symbol of a sinister force from which John can never escape and by which in the end he is doomed to be destroyed. A similar motif is employed in the much earlier *Novelle Auf dem Staatshof* (1858), where the garden pavilion engenders a feeling of fear in the narrator when he is a boy, and continues to emanate a menacing atmosphere which culminates in the tragic death of the heroine when she falls through its rotten floorboards into the dark water beneath. In *Ein Doppelgänger*, however, composed almost three decades later, Storm's treatment of an analogous motif has become much more intricate and more disturbing in its symbolic effect. Indeed for certain critics, notably in the 1950s, the centrality of the well in its apparent representation of the inevitability of fate

undergirds their interpretation of the work as a "Schicksalsnovelle". Elisabeth Muchitsch describes the well as "ein düsteres und drohendes Warnzeichen"<sup>95</sup>; for Ingeborg Welp it embodies "das Lebensfeindliche schlechthin"<sup>96</sup>, and Stuckert writes: "in dem Brunnen verkörpern sich mit sinnbildlicher Klarheit das Glück und das Verhängnis, die über dem Leben des unglücklichen John Hansen stehen"<sup>97</sup>. Care must be taken, however, to avoid employing too much of the terminology of the supernaturally caused catastrophe. As we have already discussed, for Storm the idea of a life destroyed by the cruel powers of environment is simply a more perceptible and realistic working out of a hostile and immutable fate, the shattering manifestation of a force which with reference to *Renate* he termed "das Feindliche . . . in die Außenwelt gelegt". Hans Naue, borrowing the words of Hermann Pongs, points out that this "modern" deterministic approach in Storm lacks "das Gefühl für die göttliche Erhabenheit des Schicksals"<sup>98</sup> and describes the idea of fate as being expressed through the imperfection of human society as an "unschicksalsgemäße Konstitution des Storm'schen Schicksalsbegriffs"<sup>99</sup>, but nonetheless to Storm it contained just as much potential for deeply moving tragic effect as did the traditional conceptions of the form. Günther Grimm expresses his support for Storm in this respect when he writes: "Storms Darstellung eines durch gesellschaftliche Zwänge zerstörten Lebens zielt auf einen Schicksalsbegriff, der nicht weniger unabänderliche Tragik impliziert als das übernatürliche Verhängnis der antiken Tragödie"<sup>100</sup>.

The powerful notion of determinism suggested by the well motif is, however, an uncomfortable concept for some commentators, since it serves to reduce the emphasis on social criticism. Böttger, for example, is clearly unhappy with the fateful implications surrounding the symbolism in the tale when he writes: "künstlerisch . . . ist die Erzählung durch das Brunnen-Motiv mit Restbeständen aus der Schicksalsnovelle belastet"<sup>101</sup>. Grimm's reply to Böttger's criticism goes some way towards resolving this tension. He suggests: "wahrscheinlich fungiert der Brunnen weniger als bloßes Requisit eines übergesellschaftlichen Schicksalsglaubens, er stellt eher ein (allerdings nicht sehr glücklich gewähltes) Symbol für die schicksalartige Bedrohung des 'Ausgestoßenen' dar"<sup>102</sup>. Yet even if the motif is unpopular and seems ill-chosen, this strong element of

fatalism - albeit tempered by the idealism and poeticisation of the framework in *Ein Doppelgänger* - is an ever recurring feature of Storm's later work and is an expression of his growing pessimism in a world of loneliness, inhumanity, suffering and death. The well in its "unheimlichen Tiefe" can be understood as being a symbol of the sinister threat imposed upon John by a mysterious fate which finds its pitiless means of expression in the attitudes and actions of society. It lends atmosphere and tension to the tale, moving the emphasis away from the idea of moral guilt and strengthening the notion of a tragic fate which, after all objective examinations are exhausted, still remains dark, deep and frightening. Although it may appear to sit uncomfortably in a tragedy of social compulsion, and precludes the possibility of a clear-cut interpretation such as Böttger would like, it is nonetheless typical of Storm's predilection for symbolism and ambivalence. Stuckert captures something of this when he describes the well as: "ein Sinnbild für das Rätsel seines Lebens, das er auch nicht zu lösen vermag, für die Bedrohung, unter der er steht und der er schließlich schuldlos-schuldig erliegt"<sup>108</sup>. In light of this the words of the mayor concerning John's personal situation take on a painful and universal significance:

es tut mir leid um diesen Menschen: das Glück in seinem Arm mag echt genug sein, ihm wird es nichts nützen; denn in seinem tiefsten Innern brütet er über einem Rätsel, zu dessen Lösung ihm weder sein Glück, wie Sie das junge Kind in seinen Armen zu nennen belieben, noch irgendein anderer Mensch auf Erden verhelfen kann. (IV, 158)

The element of determinism in *Ein Doppelgänger* suggested by repeated references to the well inevitably raises the problematic issue of guilt: if John has no freedom of action, in what sense can he be held morally culpable for his behaviour, or to what extent did Storm intend the personal responsibility of John to be seen as a motivating factor in the tragedy? In the opinion of the mayor it is society which bears the heaviest burden of guilt, for by it John has been mercilessly "zu Tode gehetzt", while the framework narrator ventures to say no more than: "Er war ein Mensch, er irrte, und er hat gelitten!" (IV, 194). Of the literary commentators, Frank X. Braun stands out most clearly in his refusal to board the "social criticism" bandwagon, and pointing to John's emotional instability, his explosive temper and his "inarticulate and sullen sensitivity", he insists that



"character, not social environment, furnishes the basic motivation"<sup>103</sup>. Even if this is true in part, however, Storm did not intend John's death in the well to be seen as a punishment for his crimes as Schuster presumes<sup>104</sup>. Writing about *Aquis submersus* he had said: "Schuld und Buße, das ist mir zu eng, zu kriminalistisch"<sup>105</sup>, and it is clear that in *Ein Doppelgänger* also he had a deeper, more complex reality in mind. It is worthy of note that Fontane, writing around the same time, shared Storm's preference for tragedy based on the workings of an unavoidable fate to the classical process of "Schuld und Sühne":

Das unerbittliche Gesetz, das von Uranfang an unsre Schicksale vorgezeichnet hat, das nur Unterwerfung und kein Erbarmen kennt, und neben dem unsere "sittliche Weltordnung" wie eine kleinbürgerliche, in Zeitlichkeit befangene Anschauung besteht, dies unerbittliche, unser kleines "Woher" und "Warum", unser ganzes Klügeln mit dem Finger beiseite schiebende Gesetz, das ist es, was die Seele am tiefsten fassen muß, nicht dieses Zug- und Klippklapp-Spiel von Schuld und Sühne. 106

This conception of tragedy which disregards any moralistic need for "Schuld und Sühne" is for Storm a modern variant on the ancient understanding of fate, and Grimm is correct in observing that the shift in emphasis from the responsibility of the community for John's ruin to the idea of fateful inexorability reduces the question of guilt to a secondary issue<sup>107</sup>. That which is to blame for John Hansen's death is the general "Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen, der Menschheit": *Ein Doppelgänger* is thus not a work of political invective, but the tragedy, informed by pity rather than protest, of a basically good and innocent man destroyed by the consequences of society's ignorance and imperfection.

For all the unmitigated harshness of the inner narrative, however, the final effect of the Novelle is rendered softer by the framework. It modifies the social orientation of the story and makes the closing emphasis a more personal one, bringing together the two conflicting images John's daughter Christine had retained of him, one of a kind and loving father, the other of an aggressive and violent figure. The disturbing "Spuk" and "Schreckbild" which haunt her memory are explained and thus purged of their uncanniness, so that at the end she can see her father as a whole person for the first time: "seine Tochter hat jetzt mehr an ihm; nicht nur den Vater, sondern einen ganzen Menschen" (IV, 195). The fact that the story

is told by a technique of recollection, that the present reality is one of idyllic beauty and contentment - "der hohe dunkle Wald - der schützt Sie vor allem Weltgeräusch!" (IV, 141) - and that Christine's rise to prosperity and happiness has been made possible, constitute an optimistic turning which lessens the intensity of the disaster. Storm had said before that life without hope, and in the same way literature without hope, was unbearable<sup>109</sup>, and so clearly this framework was his attempt to cling to something which might reduce the shattering effect of too ruthless a tragedy. Fritz Böttger writes:

er [Storm] gibt sich der Hoffnung hin, daß allen Fehlleistungen, Schändlichkeiten und Katastrophen zum Trotz der Weg der Menschheit im großen und ganzen aus den Dunkelheiten von Tragödien und Trauerspielen in die Helle des gesicherten bürgerlichen Stillebens führt. <sup>110</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the final idyll is no more than a "still life" and, as Ingrid Schuster points out<sup>111</sup>, in reality John Hansen's fate is the rule, while that of his daughter is the exception. The idea that the destitute child of an ex-convict should be rescued from her plight and transplanted into a world of total provision and protection is the stuff that fairy tales are made of and, as Schunicht reminds us<sup>112</sup>, completely contradicts the grim social reality of the late nineteenth century. Storm doubtless realised that the picture he had painted in the framework was an idealised one, but it was truer to his conception of art than the portrayal of total destruction and hopelessness. Moreover the framework and the inner narrative, far from being two separate and incompatible entities as many critics have claimed, serve to complement one another so that the final picture is a balanced one. The work as a whole cannot be said to constitute an escape from reality, for the harshness of the central tale eliminates any such possibility, but nor does Storm allow the *Novelle* to close on a note of unmitigated wretchedness and despair. Instead the last word is given to "dem Glauben an die künftige soziale Harmonie und an die Erziehung des **Menschengeschlechts**"<sup>113</sup>, to the expression of his humanistic desire that the evils of prejudice and social ostracism might eventually be overcome and replaced by tolerance, acceptance and reconciliation. The ending of *Ein Doppelgänger* is reminiscent of that of the earlier tragic *Novelle John Riew'*, where also a concluding note of hope is sounded for a new

generation which shows promise of avoiding the mistakes of the old:

es ist jetzt alles gut, denn wir haben die Hoffnung, freilich auch nur diese, . . . aber die Hoffnung ist die Helferin zum Leben und meist das Beste, was es mit sich führt. (III, 690)

This is typical of Storm both in his private world and in his art, that as an antidote to unbearable anguish in all the devastating tragedy which was part and parcel of existence, he persistently reasserted his fundamental belief in life and beauty even in their elusiveness:

Vorwärts ruft uns das Leben zu, es schenkt uns nichts! . . .

Man muß sich immer zu fassen suchen, man darf nicht verzweifeln! 114

In this chapter we have examined Storm's treatment of the tragic theme of social ostracism in the light of the two Novellen *Renate* (1878) and *Ein Doppelgänger* (1886). Although the works contrast quite sharply in setting and subject matter, the same essential motif is common to both, namely the formidable power of a small, closed community to determine the fate of the individual who lives at its mercy. John Hansen and Renate are both solitary characters by nature, but the tragic isolation in which they end their days, far from being theirs by choice, is inflicted on them by the prejudice and ignorant fear of a society which has made no attempt to understand them or give them a fair hearing. In both Novellen Storm clearly comes across as a humanitarian for whom the value of each human being is inherent and does not depend either on unquestioning conformity to the dogma and tradition of a particular community or on the ability to maintain an unblemished criminal record against nearly impossible odds. In these works the individual is destroyed by a tragic fate which operates through the flaws in his fellow man. The tragedy of both John and Renate lies in the fact that they are robbed of their fundamental right to human dignity and self-respect by being turned into social outcasts and surrounded in a sinister web of intolerance and malicious gossip. An element of social criticism can therefore not be ignored, but the range which the two stories encompass demonstrates that this criticism is of universal relevance to the human race and cannot be confined to any one age or social class.

We noted at the beginning of this chapter how the essence of

Storm's attitude to bigotry and discrimination in society is appropriately expressed in a letter of 1862: "Intelligenz und Sittlichkeit sind Kräfte, die zur Geltung kommen müssen, und die nicht dulden können, daß Beschränktheit und Unsittlichkeit regiere"<sup>115</sup>. The sentence which follows this is interesting in light of the conciliatory endings of both *Renate* and *Ein Doppelgänger* which conclude the tales on a note of hope:

Du wirst über den Idealisten lachen, lieber Vater, beziehungsweise etwas schelten; aber am letzten Ende pflegen die Idealisten doch recht zu behalten, wenn auch mitunter vielleicht erst hundert Jahre nachdem sie begraben sind.

More than a hundred years have now passed since the death of Storm, and the social awareness of the western world at least has increased significantly during this time: progress has been made in tackling prejudice and discrimination of all kinds, in alleviating the hardship suffered by those living on the edge of society, and in aiding the social reintegration of ex-convicts. On a darker note, however, just as well-intentioned government legislation and distribution of resources may go some way towards relieving social problems, yet remains powerless to eradicate the basic flaws of bigotry and insensitivity in human nature, so too for Storm no amount of idealistic "Verklärung" or expression of future optimism could outweigh the disturbing reality of prejudice and victimisation within society to which no easy solution existed. The final impression rendered by *Renate* and *Ein Doppelgänger*, tempered by a suggestion of hope for mankind though they may be, remains unquestionably tragic.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE TRAGEDY OF GENETIC COMPULSION

(John Riew', *Der Herr Etatsrat*)

Wie räthselhafte Wege gehet die Natur! Ein saeculum und drüber rinnt es heimlich wie unter einer Decke im Blute der Geschlechter fort; dann, längst vergessen, taucht es plötzlich wieder auf, den Lebenden zum Unheil. (II, 652)

Ich sage dir, ein jeder Mensch bringt sein Leben fertig mit sich auf die Welt; und alle, in die Jahrhunderte hinauf, die nur einen Tropfen zu seinem Blute gaben, haben ihren Teil daran. (III, 29)

These two quotations, taken from the Novellen *Aquis submersus* and *Carsten Curator* respectively, clearly reveal the strength of Storm's belief in heredity. Although the "unscientific" terminology in which his ideas are couched indicates the rudimentary nature of his knowledge, the essential point is that his personal experience of heredity informs his writing and is a central element in the motivation of a number of his tragic Novellen. The question as to how well informed Storm was of contemporary scientific developments receives no direct answer in the biographical material to hand. The findings of Gregor Mendel, published in 1866 in an article entitled "Versuche über Pflanzenhybriden"<sup>1</sup>, were based on the concept that there is a system of heredity by paired units through which factors are passed on from parent to progeny, and described the general behaviour of what we now call the gene in inheritance; but his results and theories were largely ignored by the scientific community until 1900 when independent experiments led others to the same conclusions. Storm therefore is unlikely even to have heard of Mendel, much less to have been acquainted with his work. Apart from Mendel, however, there was no shortage of scientific speculation which sought to identify a possible mechanism of heredity. Much of this led to some form of what Darwin called "pangenesis", the erroneous theory according to which each body cell produces hereditary particles that circulate in the blood before collecting in the reproductive cells. This idea, although now recognised to be a mistake on Darwin's part, remained the prevalent one during the latter half of the century, and was a subject of popular debate which Storm would have been much more likely to encounter than the more radical theories of Mendel.

Storm's personal reaction to emerging ideas on the subject of

heredity was a pessimistic one, for the notion that man's physical and mental make-up were predetermined by a biological mechanism appeared to rob the individual of his freedom and to suggest that if his actions were instinctive, then they were not reformable simply by changing his family upbringing or social environment. In his *Novellen* Storm highlighted almost exclusively the negative factors of heredity: the disastrous results of an inherited tendency to alcoholism, irascibility, violence, passion or foolishness, and in his correspondence he spelt out his gloomy conviction in unambiguous terms when he equated the workings of heredity with the ancient concept of fate by which the individual was doomed to be destroyed:

Man sagte einmal: das moderne Schicksal sind die Nerven; ich sage: es ist die Vererbung, das Angeborene, dem nicht auszuweichen ist und wodurch man trotz ehrlichen Kampfes dennoch mit der Weltordnung im Conflict auch wohl zum Untergang kommt. <sup>2</sup>

These words were written to Theodor Mommsen in 1884, two years before the death of Storm's alcoholic son Hans, and plainly indicate the measure of consternation which the subject aroused in him. The notion of the devastating power of heredity was for Storm no mere abstract knowledge, culled from journalistic sources designed to bring significant scientific discoveries within the reach of the educated general public. Although he had probably come across such articles, as a scene in the *Novelle John Riew'* may suggest<sup>3</sup>, the statement to Mommsen cited above - together with all the others on the same subject - springs primarily from the anguish of personal experience.

As we have already considered in Chapter One, the shattering impact of Hans' fate upon his father can scarcely be overemphasized, for through it Storm suffered not only the disappointment of a broken relationship and the loss of a talented son for whom he had cherished high hopes, but also a chilling realisation of the negative and apparently arbitrary workings of nature which had the power to attack and destroy both the individual and with him the very source of man's strength and protection, namely the family unit. Emotionally, Storm was deeply dependent both upon his wife and his children to shield him from the terrible threat of loneliness, but his extreme possessiveness, especially towards Hans, who as his firstborn represented the most intimate link with the memory of Constanze, served only to alienate his son further. Hans was introverted and

melancholic by nature, and could not respond to his father's constant demands for outward signs of love and affection. Thus when during his university career his earlier tendency to depression and aimlessness combined with a growing addiction to alcohol, the situation grew steadily worse and Hans strained his father's resources, both financial and psychological, to the limit.

Storm's agony at the sight of his own child being destroyed by a force over which he had no control is conveyed in his correspondence as well as in his Novellen, and it is clear that he felt an intense involvement with his son's fate. Gertrud Storm recalls her father's use of the expression "*culpa patris, culpa sanguinis*"<sup>4</sup>, a phrase which, through its juxtaposition of the ideas of paternal responsibility and genetic legacy, reinforces the impression that he brooded over the ambivalent relationship between biological predetermination and what he perceived as his personal guilt. The bitterness of Storm's plight was compounded by this inability to regard Hans' ruin as being purely the result of uncontrollable natural forces, and indeed his position here is not uncommon, since this kind of self-recrimination and sense of guilt, whether justifiable or not, is a widespread phenomenon in those whose offspring have gone astray. This unavoidable question of parental responsibility - "*ist auch eine culpa patris dabei?*"<sup>5</sup> - refused to recede from his thoughts and consequently forms a recurring theme from *Aquis submersus* onwards in the Novellen where heredity is a motivating factor in the tragic catastrophe.

There was no lack of evidence in Storm's own family to strengthen his awareness of the power of heredity: his grandfather and one of his uncles had been alcoholics<sup>6</sup>, and on Constanze's side of the family, also closely related to his own, both her mother and aunt had ended their days in a mental hospital<sup>7</sup>. The same happened with his sister Cäcilie<sup>8</sup>, and his daughter Lucie spent some months in a sanatorium in Kiel while suffering from "*tief eingewurzelter Nervosität*"<sup>9</sup>. Storm therefore did not have to search far for confirmation of the scientific findings which were gaining widespread credence at the time. In a letter of 1884 to his daughters Lucie and Elsabe he drew attention to further family links with respect to Hans:

Das Traurige ist dabei noch, daß ich Hans für einen Halbirrsinnigen halten muß, wie Euren Onkel Lucian [Constanze's brother], wie Euren Vetter Richard Stolle [son of Constanze's

sister Helene], und daß er dazu noch der unglückliche Erbe der Familienschuld, des Trunkes ist. <sup>10</sup>

It is demonstrated more than once in Storm's letters that he regarded Hans' addiction to alcohol as a kind of madness inherited from Constanze's family. At one point he recalled an incident many years previously when, looking at his sleeping child, he had sensed a strange fear of future disaster, and in retrospect he could identify the early signs of behavioural instability which had worried him in Hans at the time as being the first manifestations of a frightening hereditary power at work:

Einer Naturmacht stehe ich gewiß gegenüber, schon da er noch ein Knabe war, stand ich einmal . . . des Nachts in Angst u. Thränen vor seinem Bett, betrachtete meinen hübschen schlafenden Knaben, und fragte mich, ob ein keimender Wahnsinn in ihm sei. Seine Sonderbarkeiten waren am Tage zuvor recht schroff hervorgetreten. <sup>11</sup>

As the problems resulting from Hans' heavy drinking increased in later years, Storm almost despaired of ever being able to save him. "Nur der Tod ist hier das Ende"<sup>12</sup>, he wrote to Heyse in 1879, having by this time ceased to be taken in by the superficial and ultimately illusory signs of improvement such as Hans had displayed periodically throughout his eleven years at university. Convinced that the situation was predetermined and hopeless, his mood became one of utter despondency, as can be seen in another letter to Heyse of the same year: "Jetzt lieber Freund, ist dieses Kind, Constanzens ältester Sohn, ein ganz Verlorener. Ich weiß nicht, ob Du fühlen, ganz nachfühlen kannst, was das für mich bedeutet"<sup>13</sup>. It is difficult to assess the exact implication of this statement. Possibly Storm, nearing the end of his inner resources, temporarily evades the idea of his own responsibility here, distancing himself from the painfulness of the situation by referring to Hans as *Constanze's* son and thereby reiterating the implication that the genetic legacy which is destroying him originates from her side of the family. Alternatively, the allusion to Constanze may simply express their mutual link with her and underline the continued anguish of the family situation. Whatever the case, however, it is clear that by this stage Storm had begun to abandon hope, and that such a step was shattering in its consequences.

Of the fact that Storm was convinced of the power of heredity there is no doubt, yet since he lacked a full understanding of the processes involved, he constantly found himself asking the question



whether the biological forces at work absolved Hans entirely from personal responsibility. This is clearly expressed in a letter to Hans of December 1878:

Ich will Dir nicht Alles zur Last rechnen, der Blutstropfen, der aus Großvaters Geschlecht kommt, mag einen Theil Deines großen Unglücks, Deiner großen Schuld und des mein Leben zerstörenden Kammers tragen; aber darin liegt *Deine* Schuld, daß Du, obgleich Dir Deine Schwäche nicht verborgen bleiben konnte, Dich ganz darin hast gehen lassen, ohne auch nur den Versuch zu machen, Dich aufs feste Land zu retten. <sup>14</sup>

Yet the qualified reproach which comes across here is untypical of Storm, for it was Hans' very *inability* to help himself that caused his father such distress. Gerhard Kaiser regards him as having been too indulgent towards Hans, offering too much, rather than too little, patient understanding and support, and describes him as "ein allzu nachgiebiger, schwacher Vater, der den Sohn immer wieder auffing und nicht zur Eigenverantwortung führte"<sup>15</sup>. The harshness of Kaiser's castigation, however, makes little allowance for the inner strain of nagging, unanswered questions from which Storm suffered. Had he been convinced that Hans was personally to blame for his own plight, then he might have disciplined him more firmly. But the fact which Kaiser overlooks is that for Storm the notion of his son's guilt or responsibility was in constant tension with the thought that he was no more than a helpless victim of his natural inheritance:

können die armen Jungen etwas dafür, daß sie nicht anders sind, als sie wirklich nur sein können? Das herzerreißende Erbarmen ist vielleicht noch schlimmer, als der Zorn von dem man mitunter befallen wird. Und Beides ganz vergeblich. <sup>16</sup>

Storm's continual preoccupation with Hans' problems and the fact that his energy was sapped by his vacillation between the emotional extremes of anger and deep pity made writing a daunting task. In 1877 he wrote to Heyse: "das Schlimmste ist, daß dabei auch meine literarischen Silberquellen nicht mehr fließen"<sup>17</sup>, and he began to fear another period of unproductivity such as he had suffered after the death of Constanze. It is clear from the list of Novellen composed around this time that his fears were unsubstantiated, but the subject matter of at least four of the tragic works written between 1875 and 1885 indicates his fixation with the two themes of alcoholism and the problem of heredity. A significant role is played by one or both of these issues in *Aquis submersus*, *Carsten Curator*, *Der Herr Etatsrat* and *John Riew*, and these Novellen, together with others such as *Hans und Heinz Kirch* and *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*

where the themes of inherited defiance and irascibility are strong, reiterate and further explore the idea of "culpa patris". The one which draws most heavily on his own experience is *Carsten Curator* (1878)<sup>18</sup>, and Storm in fact described it as an "inneren Befreiungsakt"<sup>19</sup>, an attempt in other words through an exercise in creative writing to offload the overpowering weight of his sorrow and anxiety concerning Hans, just as previously he had found outlet for his emotional response to struggles within his family in *Viola Tricolor* (1874) and *Ein stiller Musikant* (1875). Yet the concerns which inspired these two earlier Novellen cannot appropriately be compared with the agony which gave rise to *Carsten Curator*. In 1875 Storm had written of his feeling with regard to Hans' predicament: "Es ist keine Sorge mehr, es ist ein Entsetzen, das mir das Blut vergiftet. Ich bin dem Unglücke gegenüber völlig machtlos"<sup>20</sup>. This same oppressive sense of anguish and hopelessness pervades the Novelle also, and although Thomas Mann has since hailed it as being "von wunderbar ernster und unerbittlicher Schönheit"<sup>21</sup>, Storm's own judgement in retrospect was that he had been unsuccessful in achieving the desired poetic effect, and that its impact was "peinlich statt tragisch"<sup>22</sup>.

The subject matter encompassed by *Der Herr Etatsrat* (1881) and *John Riew'* (1885), the two other Novellen based on the twin motifs of heredity and alcoholism, bears less resemblance to the painful reality of Storm's private experience than that of *Carsten Curator*, so writing them was in this respect a lesser ordeal for him. Both works afford a valuable insight into Storm's view of heredity as representing "das moderne Schicksal", and it is chiefly to an analysis of these two Novellen that the present chapter will be devoted. Although we have separated this discussion of the tragedy of *genetic* compulsion from the previous one on that of *social* compulsion, such a distinction is in some degree misleading. In Storm's work, just as in real life, social and hereditary forces work together in motivating human behaviour, and it is virtually impossible to isolate the two. The notion of heredity may be predominant in the Novellen which we will examine, but environmental influences also have an important part to play. Rather than this presenting a problem, however, much of the interest in these works lies in considering this issue of complex motivation in the light of the twentieth-century knowledge that individual responses to environmental influences depend on

hereditary factors. *Der Herr Etatsrat* and *John Riew'* are both strikingly "modern" in that they raise the intriguing "nature versus nurture" dilemma which still constitutes a target of research in today's psychobiology. Despite Storm's limited understanding of the subject, his depiction of the tragic individual who falls into disaster largely because his behaviour is genetically determined remains compellingly pertinent and up-to-date, and as such demands to be investigated in some detail.

#### Section A: *John Riew'*

*John Riew'* is one of Storm's later Novellen which has so far not received the critical attention that it deserves, having been judged lacking in the artistic quality of which Storm had proved himself capable in other works. "Mit anderen verglichen", commented Heyse, "ist mir diese Geschichte zu wenig kernhaft, zu lose aneinandergehängt"<sup>23</sup>, and Storm did not attempt to refute him. Due to the difficulty of his financial situation, it was essential for Storm to supplement his income by writing, and in this case, despite his shortage of compelling subject matter, he was under pressure to begin another work without further delay. Thus in retrospect he admitted: "da nichts andres kam, so schrieb ich dies, ohne viel umzusehen, mit etwas Resignation und wohl ohne den energischen inneren Antheil"<sup>24</sup>. The Novelle originally bore the unassuming but in some respects appropriate title *Eine stille Geschichte*: "Ich habe es so genannt, weil ich diesmal bescheiden auftreten muß"<sup>25</sup>, Storm wrote to Heyse, conscious of the work's inadequacies. In the end, after carrying out a few small improvements to the text, he dismissed it resignedly in a letter to Schmidt with the words: "Im Uebrigen mag das Bessern daran ziemlich gleichgültig sein, und ich tröste mich mit Heyse's Dictum: 'Transeat cum ceteris!'"<sup>26</sup>. Storm's somewhat disenchanted wish expressed in this phrase "transeat cum ceteris" - "may it pass away with the rest" - was quickly fulfilled, for after he had received the initial responses of mixed praise and disappointment from his friends and colleagues in the conventional way, little mention was ever made of the Novelle again in future correspondence.

Despite Storm's concession, however, that *John Riew'* had been written "nicht mit der zwingenden Notwendigkeit, wie Anderes"<sup>27</sup>, the Novelle is nonetheless worth examining as a thoughtful treatment of

the important themes of heredity and alcoholism. It is perhaps significant that the subject matter came to Storm, as he put it, "ganz von innen, morgens im Bett"<sup>28</sup>, thus revealing how his preoccupation with problems concerning Hans continued to find an outlet by being projected into ideas for new stories. *John Riew'* is not a "Befreiungsakt" in the sense that *Carsten Curator* had been seven years previously, for Storm, fearing that his reputation as an artist was at stake and that he must compensate for the harshness of this earlier work<sup>29</sup>, never again allowed his writing to convey such a sense of wretchedness within a personal context. At least partly for this reason then, *John Riew'* is much lighter in tone and displays fewer direct parallels with Storm's private experience. The one striking feature, however, which serves to prevent *John Riew'* from disappearing into obscurity is the remarkably "scientific" pronouncement which it contains concerning the law of heredity. The famous passage beginning with the words: "hier steht's: alles ist vererblich jetzt, Gesundheit und Krankheit, Tugend und Laster" (III, 678) is among the most frequently quoted statements in all of Storm's later works. It is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that in earlier years Storm had been much more hesitant about introducing medical or scientific subjects into a work of art. In November 1877 he chastised his young writer friend Hermione von Preuschen for venturing inappropriately into this kind of territory:

Und dann zweitens will ich Sie ausschelten, daß Sie, die Sie schon Mücken genug unter Ihren Simpelfransen haben, in die Irrenhäuser laufen und hinterher noch schlechte Verse darüber machen. Im Irrenhause haben wir nicht die Studien für unsre Kunst zu machen; die Region wollen wir den Aerzten überlassen.

30

Even as late as 1883, with the Novelle *Schweigen*, his opinion appeared to have changed little, for he stressed in a letter to Keller the fact that he had refrained from allowing the medical aspect of the psychiatric theme to play a central role in the story, this being, as he expressed it, "nach meinem Gefühle widerwärtig und für die Dichtung ungehörig"<sup>31</sup>. What we find in *John Riew'* therefore constitutes a clear progression in Storm's artistic approach. By no means has he switched to an unpleasantly clinical portrayal of his subject matter, but nonetheless the captain's well-known exchange with the doctor includes elements of a "scientific" nature which previously he would have been inclined to avoid. Even if this Novelle is not entirely successful due to Storm's failure fully to

exploit the possibilities which his material afforded<sup>32</sup>, he demonstrated later in *Ein Bekenntnis* (1887) that a medical theme could indeed be employed effectively without offending against the rules of his art. *John Riew'* is thus interesting by virtue of its moments of relative outspokenness: it is distinctive in that it contains some of Storm's most clear-cut comments on the idea of genetic compulsion, and without being one of his greatest achievements, it merits a closer look than it normally receives.

The following is a basic outline of the story. The narrator recognises an elderly man who has moved to the neighbourhood together with an old woman and a young boy as John Riewe, a Merchant Service Captain with whom he was a fellow lodger many years previously in Hamburg. He goes to visit and John brings him up to date by telling him a tale which spans three generations. He relates the story of his seafaring friend Rick Geyers, who as an attractive young man of exemplary character makes an unfortunate choice of marriage partner which eventually drives him to drink and results in his accidental death by drowning. The Captain, who feels a certain obligation towards Rick's widow and child, rents the small upper floor of their house. A special friendship grows up between him and the little girl Anna, whom he teaches to prepare his glass of grog, eventually persuading her to taste it too. He provides the capital necessary to open a linen shop and, having put Anna and her mother in business, resumes his career at sea. On his return five years later he discovers that Anna has developed a taste for alcohol and is being entertained by a young man from the upper classes whose intentions, contrary to her expectations, are far from honourable. One night the baron takes her to a ball and plies her with drink until she yields to his advances. Finding herself pregnant, she is overcome by shame. She pines for the loving father whom she can scarcely remember, and her suspicion that he had been an alcoholic is confirmed by John. Shortly after the birth of her child, having secured from John the promise to make the boy his heir, she drowns herself in the same place where her father had met his death. John, who has realised the seriousness of his responsibility for her fate, keeps his word. The boy is insolent and impetuous at first, but does well at school and goes to sea as his grandfather had done. The Novelle closes at a point ten years later when the old Captain rushes over to greet his neighbour, the

original narrator of the story, with the happy news that the young man Rick has become a Captain. Thus the story closes on a note of hope that Rick will prosper and will be free from the hereditary legacy of his forebears.

Even from this brief outline the impression may be gained that *John Riew'* is not the most obvious Novelle to be included in a study of tragedy in Storm. Certainly Stuckert in his pursuit of "tragische Schicksalsnovellen" does not rate it very highly, asserting instead: "die Erzählung reicht überhaupt nicht in die Zone echter tragischer Verschuldung hinab"<sup>33</sup>. He is critical of the fragmentary nature of the story and of the many blind alleys into which the reader is led. It appears at first, for example, that the tale will concern the secrets of the strangely still house which fascinates the narrator and is described by him in detail, an approach already employed successfully in *Bulemanns Haus* (1864) and *Im Nachbarhause Links* (1875). But then the emphasis shifts to the young boy Rick Geyers, and from him to the story first of his grandparents and then of his parents, though even these turn out to be secondary to the main motif, which is the guilt and atonement of the old Captain John Riew'. In this respect therefore the story is an unsatisfying one, lacking the pithiness and sense of inevitability necessary for tragic effect. In comparison to *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*, composed just a year previously, the attempt in *John Riew'* to recount a compelling tale of "Schuld und Sühne" unfolding over several generations seems weak and unsuccessful<sup>34</sup>.

Having said this, however, it is oversimplistic to reduce the work to a didactic narrative concerning the consequences of setting a bad example. This is the line of interpretation pursued by Böttger who describes the Novelle as "ein pädagogisches Exemplum"<sup>35</sup> which illustrates the importance of "Vernunft und planendes Bewußtsein"<sup>36</sup> in overcoming the darker sides of life and ensuring the possibility of hope. But while such an assessment is at least partly true, it only skims the surface of what Storm was trying to convey. His purpose was not to moralise or to use his art as the vehicle for a pedagogical message, but rather to portray the motivation of tragic situations in everyday life. *John Riew'* is a story in which all the necessary ingredients for a tragedy are present, but since they are inadequately fused together the intended aim is not quite achieved

and much of the effect is lost. There is nonetheless much greater depth to the work than is suggested by Böttger's idea of Storm as the "humanistischen Erzieher"<sup>37</sup>, for it raises complex questions concerning both guilt and atonement, and in dealing with the subject of heredity it addresses one of Storm's most emotive and devastating tragic themes.

In *John Riew'* the central problem of genetic compulsion is introduced in a less direct manner than it is in *Carsten Curator*. The young sailor Rick Geyers, described by his friend the narrator as "ein wilder Kerl, aber dabei ein wahres Nest von Tugenden" (III, 645), makes a promising start in life. Talented, energetic and considerate, he becomes captain of his own ship within a short time, and seems destined for a successful and happy career. Things begin to go wrong, however, when with his choice of marriage partner he makes a grave mistake. Unlike Carsten, this is not because his wife is at all frivolous or insincere: on the contrary she is portrayed as being honest, reliable and just as virtuous as he is; but by marrying this "Unmuster von Tugend" (III, 646), as she is called, Rick is unable to attain the proper balance of personalities and thereby sets himself on course for disaster. The narrator expresses the problem thus:

Wenn ein Mensch zu viel Tugenden hat, . . . dann ist der Teufel allemal dahinter . . . das ist die simple Wahrheit; es ist gegen die Natur des unvollkommenen Menschen, den unser Herrgott nun einmal so geschaffen hat; denn irgendwo in unsrem Blute sitzt er doch, und je dicker er mit Tugenden zugedeckt wird, desto eifriger bemüht er sich, die Hörner in die Höh zu kriegen. (III, 645) <sup>38</sup>

Bored and frustrated by Riekchen's total lack of opinions, passion or sparkle, John discovers a latent inclination to alcoholism awaking within him as he tries to escape from the tensions of his home life. He goes steadily downhill, loses his position as captain, and eventually meets an early death when in a drunken state he stumbles one night into a Hamburg canal.

Through the figure of Rick therefore Storm broaches the complex issue of hereditary predisposition and the manner in which it influences the individual's reaction to his environment. Had Rick's genetic make-up been different, he would have coped with his problems in another way and have found an alternative outlet for his frustrations. As it is, however, the dormant tendency which erupts

in him when circumstances are adverse is also passed on to his daughter Anna, and it is only a matter of time before the same hidden affliction is activated in her too. Stuckert is baffled by the fact that Rick's alcoholism manifests itself only *after* his daughter's birth, and understands this to contradict the possibility that Anna's subsequent problems spring from a hereditary source<sup>39</sup>. But he fails to grasp the essential point that Rick's inclinations are inborn, and the time at which they surface is irrelevant to the question whether they can be inherited by his offspring. Böttger's account of the situation too is distorted when he claims that Rick "wird . . . nur unter ganz besonderen Umständen zum Säufer, und ebenso erwacht in seiner Tochter Anna lediglich unter einer unsinnigen Erziehungsmaßnahme die Neigung zum Trunk"<sup>40</sup>. Here he clearly misses, or chooses to circumvent, the central motif of the tragedy, namely that man's behaviour operates within limits determined by his genetic characteristics and not merely his environment.

Despite the significance of heredity, certain critics have claimed that Anna may be seen as at least partly responsible for her own fate. Rogers suggests that she is guilty of "profligacy and wantonness"<sup>41</sup>, while Schuster describes her as "eitel, verzogen und eigenwillig"<sup>42</sup>, and even the narrator tells us that there is "etwas Begehrliches" (III, 639) in her character. At the same time, however, she is depicted as doing everything "mit einer Art von froher Anmut" (III, 639), and there is a captivating charm in her mixture of coyness and naive extravagance. One day John says to her in jesting reprimand: "nicht wahr, schlecken und dich putzen, . . . das möchtest du wohl dein Leben lang; aber wart nur, Rackerchen, es wird noch anders kommen!" (III, 639). Yet little does he realise the ironic truth in this prediction or anticipate his own grievous role in bringing it about. In Anna the striking resemblance to Lore Beauregard in *Auf der Universität* (1862) cannot be ignored, for although in the earlier work the notion of genetic compulsion is less fully developed, it is present nonetheless, and in many aspects the course followed by both heroines is conspicuously alike. It is interesting to note Storm's comments on Lore, written in a letter to Brinkmann over twenty years before the composition of *John Riew*:

So sah ich sie vor mir, als ich ihre Geschichte schrieb. Eine zarte erregte Mädchennatur mit dem eingebornen Drang nach schöner Gestaltung des Lebens, dessen Erfüllung die äußern Verhältnisse versagen. So geht sie von Jugend auf



traumwandelnd am Abgrund hin. Ein Hauch genügt, sie hinabzustürzen. So kommt es. Sie wirft sich einem Scheinbild in die Arme und wird sich dann bewußt, daß sie dadurch das ihr eingeborne Urbild der Schönheit so befleckt hat, daß nur das dunkle Wasser des Styx noch Hülfe bringen kann. Taucht sie aus dieser schwarzen Flut nicht schöner und reiner in der Seele des Lesers auf, so habe ich freilich mein Spiel verloren. <sup>43</sup>

The repeated use of the word "eingeboren" in this description of Lore underlines the part played by her innate characteristics and desires in causing her tragic end. But just as Lore's disaster is motivated by a combination of genetic and social factors, so too it is the case with Anna. The person responsible for leading Anna to the "precipice" is John Riew' who first activates her latent tendency to alcoholism, and then it is an inevitable development that in due course the baron, by taking advantage of her weakness, should finally push her over the edge to her ruin.

Regardless of Anna's faults, therefore, her genetic predisposition compounded by the influence of society robs her of her freedom and must thus be seen to absolve her from personal guilt. She herself is unaware of what she is doing, and it is only when she is already irretrievably far along the road to destruction that a glimmer of understanding dawns. During her pregnancy she finds herself strangely drawn to the distant memory of her father, and one evening after much contemplation she quietly asks John: "Ohm, . . . hat mein Vater auch von dem Schrecklichen getrunken, was du immer abends trinkst und - wo ich auch davon getrunken habe?" (III, 677). This question is a brief and poignant indication of her insight into her fate. She discerns at last the awful truth that she has inherited from her father a fault which John has been instrumental in triggering, but her perception remains vague and hesitant, and she never raises the sinister subject again. Since this is the pivotal theme of the Novelle, however, Anna's imperfect attempt to probe to the roots of her tragedy is supplemented and elucidated by Storm through the appeal to an objective and "scientific" authority. In the critical pub scene, in which John Riew' reads aloud to his friend the doctor from a Hamburg newspaper, the focus of attention is the popular late-century notion that man is not a free agent since his course is already mapped out in part by his forebears:

Lesen sie es selbst . . . hier steht's: alles ist vererblich jetzt, Gesundheit und Krankheit, Tugend und Laster; und wenn einer der Sohn eines alten Diebes ist und stiehlt nun selber, so soll er dafür nur halb so lange ins Loch als andre ehrliche Spitzbuben,

die es aber nicht von Vaters wegen sind! . . . den Mitschuldigen Vorfahren müßte gerechterweise doch wenigstens ein Teil der Schuld zugerechnet werden, wenn auch die Strafe an ihnen nicht mehr vollziehbar oder schon vollzogen ist. Wissen sie nicht, daß selten ein Trinker entsteht, ohne daß die Väter auch dazu gehörten? Diese Neigung ist vor allem erblich. (III, 678 f.)

By claiming the support of medicine and media, Storm thus intensifies the central theme of the work. Moreover, by moving beyond the specific issue of alcoholism and addressing the controversial subject of crime he broadens the significance of the debate on heredity to encompass a vast and devastating array of possibilities, and as Schuster writes, "er deutet ein Naturgesetz an, das den Menschen zur Unvollkommenheit zwingt"<sup>44</sup>. His words indeed have far-reaching implications, and reveal the seriousness of his conviction regarding the laws of genetic compulsion.

Heredity is, however, not the sole factor which motivates the tragic catastrophe in *John Riew'*, for as we will proceed to examine, personal guilt also has a part to play. A share of the responsibility is perhaps carried by Anna's mother Riekchen, the "einfältige Tugendmensch" (III, 647) who is a model of cleanliness and domestic capability, but lacks the wisdom to distinguish harmful diversions from innocuous ones, genuine protestations from counterfeit. The narrator describes Riekchen's thoughtless action in allowing her young daughter to wait daily on the Captain, bringing him the hot water for his glass of grog, as being "kein Zeugnis für die Verständigkeit der Frau" (III, 640). Moreover she looks on with "unschuldige Freude" (III, 654) as John spoils and pampers the child, accustoming her to being the centre of attention and to receiving little gifts of confectionery, silk and lace which awaken her desire for things inappropriate to her station. Riekchen and John are both foolishly unaware of the ruin to which they are paving the way, but as John declares with hindsight: "Dummheit ist auch eine arge Sünde!" (III, 654), and the mother's continued failure to recognise the warning signs results in inevitable calamity. It is interesting that here in a crucial respect the final version of the Novelle differs from the earlier notes made by Storm in a diary entry of October 1883. In the original the mother smells alcohol on her daughter's breath each evening on returning from the lodger's room, and when the girl explains how she must always taste the drink after mixing it, her mother exclaims in alarm: "Hüte dich nur, das ist Gift und war unser Unglück!"<sup>45</sup>. But Storm in the end adopts a less explicit

approach. The fact that in the finished work Riekchen is portrayed as a much more naive figure who never even learns the cause of her husband's untimely death reduces her responsibility for what befalls Anna, even if it does not exonerate her entirely. With no conception of the dangers which her child faces, like Frau Miller in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, she is flattered by the advances of the baron, listening to him "in dummer Anbetung" (III, 666) and gullibly assuming that his intentions are noble. The ending of the Novelle, however, reveals a positive development in Riekchen's character, for in the face of catastrophe and degradation her previous lack of discernment gives way to an awareness, at least in part, of her own guilt. "Wenn wir unsere Sündenschuld abziehen, so müssen wir mit dem Rest schon fertig werden" (III, 685), she says to John, and suddenly appears to him in a new light as "ein Engel der Geduld". It is perhaps through her quiet resilience that John himself is strengthened to cope with the ultimate blow of Anna's suicide, and by helping him to raise the illegitimate child with whom they are left, she shares to an extent in his personal process of atonement.

While the part played by John and Riekchen in the motivation of the tragedy stems simply from thoughtless stupidity, there are others who are guilty of much more calculated behaviour in driving Anna to her final ruin. A palpable element of social criticism comes across in Storm's portrayal of the baron as a "Wasserschößling aus großer Familie . . . , von denen, die von Schulden leben und deren Geschäft ist, anderer Leute Kinder zu verderben" (III, 674). Despite his sophisticated elegance and charm, the baron's face displays the signs of a lifestyle of decadence and excess, and he is quite unscrupulous in his deceitful manipulation of Anna and her mother so that he can satisfy his own dissolute desires. Knowing Anna's weakness, he deliberately plies her with drink in order to seduce her, and afterwards is never heard of again. Here Storm is much more censorious in his depiction of the aristocracy than for example Fontane, whose social novels such as *Stine* and *Irrungen Wirrungen* treated a similar subject. Storm nursed an intense dislike for the condescending attitude and degenerate social mores of the nobility in general, and his disapproval of this class, personified in the baron and his friend, cannot be ignored in the pages of *John Riew*. Yet while this is the case, it has on the other hand been suggested by Ebersold that the baron's behaviour is just as much subject to

genetic constraints as is Anna's, and since "das Verführen hübscher Bürgermädchen liegt ihm im Blut"<sup>46</sup>, he is not therefore to be seen as bearing any guilt. But this tolerant view of the villain underestimates the complexity of the issue of responsibility, for although the heredity motif is of central importance, social factors are also crucial in the motivation of the tragedy. This is demonstrated further in the actions of the two young women who are Anna's friends and neighbours and who, foreseeing the impending disaster, fail to warn Anna of the baron's true nature or to offer her any help in her subsequent humiliation. Instead they pitilessly ostracise her by refusing her further sewing work, and self-righteously they observe her ruin from a safe distance with the result that in her isolation the painful awareness of her "Sünde" and "Schande" is intolerably heightened until she can no longer cope with the prospect of living. Thus within a tragedy of principally genetic compulsion, the attitude of society, as Schuster has it<sup>47</sup>, is the straw that breaks the camel's back.

Although our discussion thus far has focused on Anna and on the factors which contribute to her downfall, it must nevertheless be remembered that Storm intended not Anna but John to be viewed as the central tragic figure. This is indicated most notably by his decision to change the title of the work from *Eine stille Geschichte* under which it originally appeared in the *Deutsche Rundschau* to *John Riew'* for the first book edition. Moreover it is also strongly suggested by the thrust of the few phrases in which he summarised to Heyse his initial conception of the story: "da stellte . . . sich mir ein alter gutmüthiger Kapitän vor, der so ein Kind an seinem Leibtrank theilnehmen ließ"<sup>48</sup>. Here it is apparent that, before any of the other characters or motifs were developed, Storm envisaged a tale principally concerning an amiable, kind-hearted individual who in ignorance commits an error which is far-reaching in its consequences. The finer aspects of the motivation were not added until later, and are secondary in importance to the theme of John's unwitting guilt, his recognition of it, and his subsequent attempt to atone.

The central narrative of *John Riew'* bears a certain resemblance to that of *Ein Bekenntnis* which appeared two years later in 1887, for it is more than simply a story occasioned by the reunion of two

long-lost friends through which the speaker relates the significant developments in his life since the time of their last meeting. It is in fact a confession, a step-by-step account of the incurring of guilt and a vivid depiction of the mental anguish in which this results after the awful truth has dawned. The Captain's tale is interspersed with expressions of his pain as looking back he recognises the disastrous error of actions in which at the time he had seen no harm. "Ich alter Tor", he reproaches himself as he recalls how he had pressurised Anna to taste a sip of his drink against her inclination, "ich muß jetzt denken, daß ihre Natur uns habe warnen wollen; aber ich ging wie mit verbundenen Augen" (III, 655). He confesses his lack of awareness of his serious responsibility for exploiting the child's desire to please him, and resorting to his familiar seaman's terminology he laments his thoughtless failure to prevent the ship of her young life from going fatally off course as a result: "Gott verzeihe mir! Das Kind steuerte backbord, aber ich hätte steuerbord halten sollen" (III, 657). These and other statements of bitter regret, however, are expressed only with the benefit of hindsight. At the time of commission these deeds were no more than "ein Kinderspaß" (III, 655), as devoid of intent to injure as they were of foresight. Thus when the moment of truth eventually arrives near the end of the tale, John is unprepared for it and devastated by it. "Deine Schuld, deine Schuld!" (III, 679), he hears the voice of his old friend Rick Geyers cry repeatedly in his head when he learns from the doctor that on the fateful night of the ball Anna had been helplessly drunk. A sudden realisation of the crucial part that he had played many years previously in awaking in the young girl the taste for alcohol explodes upon his consciousness with such overwhelming force that he no longer hears what the doctor is saying, aware only of his compelling desire to expiate his guilt by doing everything within his power to make amends: "'Helfen will ich, . . . soweit eines ehrlichen Menschen Kraft nur reichen kann!' . . . Den Kopf voll guter Werke, trabte ich über die Straße" (III, 680).

John's process of atonement turns out to be a long and painstaking one which follows a harder course than he can possibly at first anticipate. Such is his willingness to spare Anna any further pain or degradation that he offers to marry her and provide for her child, thinking that thus her shame can be overcome and

their future salvaged. Here indeed a spark of his heroism shines through, for as a seafaring man who has enjoyed a lifetime of freedom from both financial and geographical constraints, such a decision will involve sacrifice and responsibility. But despite his deep concern for her, John does not fully comprehend the level of Anna's wretchedness. She declines his offer vehemently, crying, "nein, das will ich nicht! Du bist so ehrenhaft und brav! . . . du weißt es doch - die Schande ist so ansteckend!" (III, 682). John does not realise that her sole and pressing concern at this point to ensure that her son will not be left destitute is in fact the prelude to her suicide. Poignantly, this is the same girl of whom he had said on first seeing her as a peacefully sleeping two-year-old: "es glühte gleich einem Christkind wie von innerem Rosenlichte" (III, 650), and of whom his friend Rick had boasted with fatherly pride and infatuation: "Ja, Alter, dem müssen alle Teufel weichen!" (III, 650). A bitter irony lies in the fact that it is John himself, the one to whom this remark is so confidently addressed, who introduces her to the very demon which eventually is the cause of her ruin. Anna's own realisation of the dreadful power which alcohol holds - "es bringt uns um den Verstand; die Bösen haben dann Gewalt über uns" (III, 677) - comes only when it is already too late. The child that had once radiated the light of innocence is now engulfed by the darkness of guilt, and death offers the only escape from her disgrace. Anna's suicide, however, while for her it is a release from social humiliation, is for John a further harrowing repercussion of his earlier actions which adds to the burden of his guilt. Deeply shaken, he nonetheless faces up firmly to what he regards as his inescapable responsibility for Anna's fate, and commits himself with determination to the onerous task of rearing her difficult and strong-willed child as the means of his atonement.

On a superficial level, therefore, it may seem reasonable to claim that the seriousness of John's long-term undertaking in adopting the young boy Rick lends him credibility as a tragic figure genuinely seeking to atone: but this would be to overlook certain inconsistencies in his behaviour which render the effect less convincing. Perhaps the most incongruous aspect of the work is that John should relate his tale of the terrible power of alcohol, including the painful recognition of his own guilt in setting a bad example, while sitting in front of a steaming glass of grog. For one

ostensibly devastated by Anna's ruin, whose sorrow has motivated him to repent and to atone, such a failure to deal with the root cause of the disaster seems surprising to say the least. Although he abstains from pure spirits during Rick's childhood, the boy is nonetheless familiarised at least with the smell, if not the taste, of fortified wines, and thus a shadow of doubt is cast on the thoroughness of John's conversion and continuing regret. Moreover this impression is accentuated at the close of the story when John returns to his old familiar rum to celebrate the news of Rick's promotion to Captain: "Aber heute abend, Nachbar, . . . trinken wir beide in meiner Koje ein Steifes miteinander und - Goddam! - von meinem alten Jamaika!" (III, 690). Allowing for the fact that old habits die hard, and that besides there is indeed reason for celebration, there is still an inappropriate blitheness about this scene which leaves John in an ambivalent light. Storm himself appears to have been unaware of any inconsistency here: critical reaction to the character of the Captain was very positive, with Jensen describing him as a "feinstes psychologisches Kabinettstück"<sup>49</sup> and Schmidt calling him a "prächtigen alten Burschen"<sup>50</sup>, and in retrospect Storm was evidently satisfied, writing to Keller: "der Alte gefällt mir auch jetzt noch"<sup>51</sup>. Despite this, however, one is left with the feeling that a more pensive conclusion with a lesser element of *Biedermeier* "Idyllik" would have been more in keeping with the narrative as a whole and have lent greater credibility to John as a chastened and atoning figure. As things stand, the final impression is one of an imperfect tale of "Schuld und Sühne": John is not shattered by the awareness of his own guilt to the same extent as Hans Kirch or Carsten Curator, and his atonement has less far-reaching implications for his future than does that of Franz Jebe in *Ein Bekenntnis* or Junker Hinrich in *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*.

The ending of the story, however confident and forward-looking it may at first appear, thus creates more problems than it solves. One wonders whether Erich Schmidt, who clearly liked the work, was not overly liberal with his praise for the Novelle in general and particularly for the closing prospect of what he called "eine frisch und gesund ins Leben steuerende neue Generation"<sup>52</sup>. Schmidt appears to ignore the weakness of this conclusion when considered in the light of events that have preceded it. The disturbing fact overlooked by John is that the young Rick Geyers, setting off along

the same road that his grandfather pursued before him, will not be immune to the cares and temptations of the world, and could easily discover the inherited family tendency to drink awaking in him when under pressure. Given that the picture painted in the tale of his behavioural development as a child is a stormy and uneven one, and that the genetic legacy left to him by both Anna and the baron may not be most conducive to stability and control, there is ultimately no guarantee of a happy ending. The central thrust of the tragedy renders words like those of Schmidt inappropriate: "frisch und gesund" can no longer be seen as fitting descriptions of man's actions when viewed against the background of a story which highlights the predetermining role of heredity in destructive inclinations. The idea of a robust new generation starting out on life with a clean slate may have appealed to Storm as an antidote to the depressing elements of the tale, but it is a superficial conclusion which conveys a fragile sense of security and is at variance with his fundamentally pessimistic convictions regarding the law of heredity. Thus the necessity felt by Storm to poeticise reality serves to keep *John Riew'* safely within the bounds of Poetic Realism, but in so doing sacrifices the more powerful, albeit more negative ending to which the story might otherwise have led.

Heyse, with his customary acuteness, was quick to identify the essential problem which accounted for the Novelle's lack of success. "Die Nemesis der Erbsünde klingt nur leise an"<sup>53</sup>, was his simple but perceptive comment, which alone of all the critical evaluations received by Storm properly addressed the central issue. Storm himself recognised with hindsight the discrepancy between the unpleasant, frightening nature of his subject and the congenial, relaxed manner in which the story was related. He confessed to Schmidt on 11.7.1885:

Meine "stille Geschichte" hat Vielen nicht gefallen . . . Ich selbst glaube darin jetzt einen Fehler u. den Grund abfälliger Urtheile zu erblicken, daß das scharfe, fast häßliche Motiv in zu großem Abstand zu der milden Freundlichkeit des alten Erzählers u. also der Art der Erzählung steht.<sup>54</sup>

This significant weakness was clearly a matter of some concern to Storm, for in a letter to Keller a month later he returned to the same point, reiterating it in slightly different words: "im übrigen leidet die Sache wohl daran, daß die milde und behagliche Art der Erzählung mit dem eigentlich furchtbaren Stoff in zu großem Kontrast steht"<sup>55</sup>.



If, as would seem logical, the reader is to understand these statements as at least in part an acknowledgement on Storm's part of his failure to draw out the full implications of his tragic theme, then this reveals the error of Böttger's assumption when he writes: "Die Erzählung 'John Riew' ist in ihrer Tendenz gegen den Vererbungsfatalismus gerichtet"<sup>56</sup>. Accentuating the story's positive ending, Böttger asserts that by the 1880s Storm had moved on from his "pseudowissenschaftlichen Fatalismus" of earlier years, giving up "die vulgäre Vorstellung vom automatischen Verfallensein an die Vererbung" and replacing it with a "temperierten Altershumanismus"<sup>57</sup>. He cites no evidence to substantiate such a large claim, however, and his argument thoroughly contradicts the many expressions of Storm's dark despair with regard to Hans<sup>58</sup>, as well as his unequivocal statement of 1884 to Mommsen which describes heredity as "das moderne Schicksal . . . wodurch man trotz ehrlichen Kampfes dennoch mit der Weltordnung im Conflict auch wohl zum Untergang kommt"<sup>59</sup>. In the 1880s Storm had, if anything, become more convinced of the devastating power of heredity. If this fails to come across in *John Riew*, then it is due not to a crucial change of position, but rather to considerations about to be examined which are peculiar to this one Novelle.

Two reasons may be identified for the weakness of the tragic effect in *John Riew*. The first of these is relatively straightforward and was clearly perceived by Storm himself: it lies in the fact that the work had been composed too hastily and he had not allowed the ideas sufficient time to mature in his mind before committing them to paper. "Daß der Stoff nicht erschöpft ist, sehe ich nun wohl"<sup>60</sup>, he conceded in a letter to Heyse, having a few days previously written to Schmidt:

Ich habe es übrigens ganz wie im naiven Traumzustande geschrieben und bin um einen Konflikt eigentlich herumgekommen. Der Stoff hätte ganz anders ausgenutzt werden können; er hatte nicht lange genug gelegen.<sup>61</sup>

The fact that Storm ended up circumventing the central conflict which, according to his own theory, was essential for the success of the Novelle just as it was for the drama<sup>62</sup>, may however be attributed to a more complex problem than simply the lack of "energischen inneren Anteil"<sup>63</sup> combined with the pressure to deliver. This second concern stems from Storm's personal dissatisfaction with *Carsten Curator* (1878), the previous Novelle to focus on the tragedy

of genetic compulsion. Many of his letters testify to his disappointment with this work and to his self-reproach for, as he saw it, having spoiled the intended tragic effect through being too intensely involved with the subject and failing to temper its pathetic hopelessness by introducing some spark of optimism. In May 1878, shortly after the *Novelle's* publication, he wrote to Schmidt: "sie wurde in hoffnungsloser Stimmung niedergeschrieben"<sup>64</sup>, and in February of the same year to Keller: "Diesmal fehlte die Heiterkeit, die noch not tut, um mich über den Stoff zu erheben"<sup>65</sup>. In Chapter Two mention has already been made of Storm's letter to Hermione von Preuschen in which he insisted on the importance of hope both in life and in literature, and this sentiment is underlined by the frequency of its repetition during the period immediately following *Carsten Curator*. In April, for example, he wrote to Mörike's widow: "Leider wird . . . die . . . Erzählung Sie nicht eben erquicken; denn wir können wohl das Glück entbehren, aber nicht die Hoffnung"<sup>66</sup>, and again a month later in a letter to Albert Nieß he asserted: "Im Leben und in der Poesie können wir wohl das Glück entbehren, aber nicht die Hoffnung. Die Gestalt des Heinrich aber ist so gezeichnet, daß sie von vornherein auch diese ausschließt"<sup>67</sup>. In light of these statements, alongside which could be cited many others reflecting Storm's consternation that the work had turned out to be "peinlich statt tragisch"<sup>68</sup>, it can be understood why he would be careful to avoid making the same mistake in a future *Novelle* on a related theme.

What we find therefore some seven years later in *John Riew'* is in many respects a reaction against the factors which to Storm's mind had spoiled *Carsten Curator*. He had criticized his strained treatment of the subject matter in the earlier *Novelle*, admitting it was the case that "der Leser muß fühlen, daß dem Autor das Behagen des Schaffens bei der Arbeit fehlte"<sup>69</sup>. Consequently it is not surprising that, as if at least unconsciously to compensate for this, the idea of "Behagen" features strongly in *John Riew'*: the tale is told in a relaxed atmosphere, no dogmatic conclusions are drawn, and the ending is ostensibly a happy one. Ironically though, it is precisely this "behagliche Art der Erzählung"<sup>70</sup>, the gentle poeticization of reality to which he was irresistibly drawn, which in the end presented a problem for Storm since he recognised that it did not harmonise with the "scharfe, fast häßliche Motiv"<sup>71</sup>, and thus

weakened the impact. After portraying the character of Heinrich in *Carsten Curator* as being "statt mit poetischem Gehalt mit einer häßlichen Wirklichkeit ausgestattet"<sup>72</sup>, Storm tried in subsequent Novellen to escape from excessive ugliness; but he tended in *John Riew* towards the other pole and ultimately created a work which was reduced in its tragic effect and in which, as Heyse rightly commented, "die Nemesis der Erbsünde klingt nur leise an".

As we have seen, the theme of genetic compulsion in *John Riew* is less fully developed than it might have been, and moreover attention is drawn away from it by the complex social aspects of the motivation. Ironically, however, as an "imperfect" or "disappointing" work which defies any attempt at a clear-cut interpretation, it is also "realistic" in a manner for which it has received little credit in the past. Just as in scientific research it is of little value to ask, "How much of trait X is due to heredity and how much to environment?", since neither agent alone can produce the observed behaviour, equally in *John Riew* it is inappropriate to attempt to quantify the significance of hereditary alcoholism in causing Anna's tragic ruin. The naivety of such a question indicates a failure to appreciate the nature of gene-environment interactions, a problem much discussed in the wake of Darwin, Spencer and Huxley and of which Storm, even though he was neither a scientist nor a philosopher, was clearly aware. There is no doubt that the issue of heredity was a serious and deeply personal concern for Storm, but he was equally mindful of the enormous potential of society to influence the fate of the individual. Ingrid Schuster renders this point in a pertinent manner, and her words, to which brief reference has already been made, are in conclusion worth quoting in full. With respect to *John Riew* she writes:

Der Mensch ist zwar nicht völlig ein Opfer seiner Erbmasse (wie in "Carsten Curator"); die Umwelt ist das Zünglein an der Waage - es kann als ausgleichendes Korrektiv wirken oder der Tropfen sein, der das Gefäß zum Überlaufen bringt. Meist ist letzteres der Fall. <sup>73</sup>

### Section B: *Der Herr Etatsrat*

*Der Herr Etatsrat* was the first complete work written by Storm after his retirement to the rural seclusion of Hademarschen. It was in this same year that he made his well-known statement: "ich bedarf äußerlich der Enge, um innerlich ins Weite zu gehen"<sup>74</sup>, and the Novelle testifies to the fresh intensity and breadth of artistic purpose which the peaceful surroundings and his newly found freedom from the distraction of professional duties aided him to achieve. But for the fact that *John Riew'* and *Der Herr Etatsrat* share the common theme of an inherited propensity to alcoholism, further similarities between them are not immediately obvious. *Der Herr Etatsrat* (1881), written four years before *John Riew'*, is by far the weightier of the two, and is a grotesque and harrowing tale which sent out shock waves through a considerable proportion of Storm's readership. We glean from letters to Schmidt and Heyse that "bis ins Kurland hinein . . . bei zarten Frauen u. jungen Predigern Schrecken"<sup>75</sup> and "wahres Entsetzen"<sup>76</sup> were the reactions provoked by the Novelle; but despite the outcry Storm offered no apology for its content, and on the contrary persisted in regarding it as one of his best works:

Der "Etatsrat" . . . ist eine äußerst herbe und in ihrer schroffen Objektivität wohl etwas pessimistische Geschichte; an kräftiger Herausarbeitung der Gestalten aber darf sie wohl zu meinem Besten gerechnet werden. <sup>77</sup>

The central figure of the *Etatsrat* himself is perhaps the most extreme ever created by Storm in terms of his amoral behaviour which fluctuates between the sinister and the bestial. He has no redeeming features such as those possessed by *John Riew'*, and the conclusion to which the story is inevitably driven because of him is devastatingly bleak, devoid of any suggestion of hope like that found in other Novellen. Storm wrote to his nephew Ernst Esmarch: "der Arbeit liegt die Stimmung einer etwas finstern Weltanschauung zugrunde"<sup>78</sup>, but even this was to put it mildly, for in unmitigated wretchedness the tale outstrips everything else that he produced.

It is striking that the Novelle stands in such sharp contrast to its predecessor *Die Söhne des Senators* which Storm had described as a "freundliche Familiengeschichte"<sup>79</sup>, based on an anecdotal motif and tending towards a "leichten Lustspielton"<sup>80</sup>. Stuckert regards this as an example of the way in which Storm, still attracted to both the

idyllic and the tragic portrayal of reality, made a sharper distinction between the two in his later years, allowing them to exist independently as the predominant elements in separate Novellen, and consciously alternating between them "als Mittel des Kontrastes und der Steigerung"<sup>81</sup>. While this may in certain cases be true, there is evidence, however, that in this instance the contrast was motivated not chiefly by autonomous choice, but rather by pressure exerted on him through the comments of friends. Petersen in particular voiced his dislike of writing which was starkly pessimistic, as is seen in a letter of Storm to Heyse in October 1879:

Nur schade, daß wir beide stets so Düsteres zu Markte bringen. Petersen hat mir in puncto "Eekenhof" darüber neulich ein großes Klagelied gesungen. Er will alte freundliche Rokokogeschichten von mir, wo er den Tobak unserer Altvorderen riecht. <sup>82</sup>

To Storm the critical opinion of his colleagues was of considerable importance and, eager as he was to retain Petersen's favour and respect, his next Novelle, *Die Söhne des Senators*, was clearly written with him in mind: "[ich] schreibe Petersen zu Gefallen, der das Tragische nicht leiden kann, eine kleine, freundliche Geschichte, die wohl nächstens in der "Rundschau" zutage kommen wird"<sup>83</sup>. After the completion of *Die Söhne des Senators*, however, Storm felt compelled to return to the harsher note which was being sounded ever more frequently in his later work, and despite his fear that such an approach might not meet with unqualified approval, he proceeded with conviction. In February 1881 he finished work on the manuscript of *Der Herr Etatsrat*, and in April he wrote to Schmidt:

Also, 'liebster Freund, meinen "Etatsrat" werden Sie . . . erhalten haben; daß er Ihnen besondres Vergnügen bereitet, will ich nicht erwarten; aber er mußte gleichwohl geschrieben werden. <sup>84</sup>

As Stuckert points out<sup>85</sup>, the consternation aroused amongst the reading public by *Der Herr Etatsrat* matched that which had greeted the poem *Geschwisterblut* some twenty-eight years previously. Storm, who had anticipated the moral outrage that was likely to ensue, bemoaned to Heinrich Keck the fact that literature was so often condemned as a result of being judged according to the wrong criteria:

Wie der "Etatsrat" wirken würde, habe ich freilich vorausgesehen; . . . die meisten urtheilen ganz unkünstlerisch; erwarten sie Honig und treffen auf Schwarzbrod oder gar Wermuth statt Rosen, dann schütteln sie den Kopf, sie beurtheilen immer nur den Stoff, nicht die künstlerische Bearbeitung. <sup>86</sup>

Although Storm detested the prudery and sanctimoniousness which was prevalent among the middle classes, he was obliged to bow to it in some measure at least, for the Westermanns refused to publish the *Novelle* before certain passages were altered. Frustrated by their censorship, Storm urged Keller not to read the story in this form but to wait instead for the book edition where the original version would be reinstated<sup>87</sup>. Meanwhile, as the disapproval generated by the unpleasant aspects of the work continued to reach Storm, his personal response was seen to be mixed. A brief comment to Schmidt reveals on the one hand his somewhat perverse amusement at the stir which he had provoked among those of delicate sensibilities: "Ich kann, zu meiner Schande, nicht leugnen, daß es mir Spaß macht"<sup>88</sup>; but the cavalier approach displayed here is not representative of his general attitude at the time. On the contrary, he undertook seriously to defend the work and, as we will consider presently, sought to justify its ugliness as an acceptable means to a specific aesthetic end. He persevered in reiterating his argument, but the effect of the opposition was wearing nonetheless, and when he began work on his next *Novelle* *Hans und Heinz Kirch*, he was careful to avoid anything of a strongly offensive or controversial nature. Writing in December 1881 to the Paetels he informed them:

An einer *Novelle* für die *Rundschau* arbeite ich seit Oktober, wo ich mir den Stoff in der kleinen Ostseestadt Heiligenhafen . . . eingeheimst habe; und hoffe Ende Februar damit fertig zu werden. Ein "Etatsrat" wird nicht darin vorkommen.<sup>89</sup>

While *Der Herr Etatsrat* is regarded chiefly as a tragic tale of the decline of a family through alcoholism and parental neglect, its scope is wide and it offers many avenues of inquiry. The tragedy, when examined at its most basic level, reveals the problem of hereditary alcoholism as its primary motivating factor, but beyond this pragmatic level the tale also incorporates elements of the fantastic and symbolic which have caused it to be compared to the works of artists as diverse as E.T.A. Hoffmann and Franz Kafka. These are most interesting parallels to which we will return, while not forgetting the links with Shakespeare pointed out by Storm himself, as in his correspondence concerning the *Novelle* he appealed to Shakespearean precedents to defend not only his use of the grotesque, but also his portrayal of the tragic destruction of innocent individuals. The complexity and quality of *Der Herr Etatsrat* was clearly identified by Heyse when he wrote: "Ich habe Deinen

Etatsrat gelesen, aber Du bist ja ein Verschwender!"<sup>90</sup>. Recognising the depth of characterisation, Heyse felt that Storm could have exploited the potential of his material to create a much more substantial work. The Novelle therefore is a powerful work of art which, even if it is not usually listed among Storm's "masterpieces", is nonetheless a noteworthy achievement which furnishes a valuable insight into the writer's conception of tragedy.

The narrator recounts the story of the Etatsrat Sternow, the man he calls the "beast". Sternow is a powerful dyke administrator, renowned for his skill in engineering, but is also a frightening and grotesque figure who spends his evenings drinking and bellowing out student songs until, in a hideously drunken state, he is eventually put to bed by Käfer, his scheming young clerk and factotum. He is indifferent to the plight of his children who grow up without a mother, and although his son Archimedes proves at school to have a talent for mathematics, he refuses to let him go to university, obliging him instead to spend years carrying out menial office tasks at home. An even more solitary existence is led by his sweet and innocent daughter Sophie who is dependent on the care of a succession of cooks and maids, and has no real friends at school. The one occasion on which she is allowed to invite some girls from school to a tea party ends in disaster as a result of her father's drunken and offensive behaviour. When Archimedes is at last permitted to begin his studies, this is due mainly to the insidious intervention of Käfer who has his own base reason for wanting him to leave the house, and has managed to sway the Etatsrat's opinion. Archimedes is a highly conscientious student, but as time goes on the inclination to alcoholism which he has inherited from his father manifests itself in increasing proportion. Signs of madness gradually appear, and before long, physically shattered by his excesses, he dies of a fever. His father, however, who has remained absent from his sick-bed, is unmoved by his death and moreover refuses to settle his son's outstanding accounts. The tragic tale of the fate of Archimedes is followed by that of his sister Phia. Without her brother to protect her, she falls helplessly into the evil clutches of Käfer who has his way with her, and in her shame and desperation she has no one to turn to. Her story comes to an early end when, after the traumatic night on which she gives birth, she is buried along with her child. Only a few neighbours form her cortège: Käfer

has left on a journey, and her father the Etatsrat sits smoking a pipe on his balcony, waving condescendingly and calling out cynical comments to the mourners as they pass by. Eleven years later the narrator returns to the town to find that the Etatsrat has gone and his job no longer exists. Few remember him, and his once acclaimed dyke profiles have been replaced by more modern ones.

It is interesting that Petersen, even if he disliked the harsh outcome of the *Novelle*<sup>91</sup>, nonetheless praised Storm's characterisation of the Etatsrat. Having described him as "meisterhaft gezeichnet", he went on to comment: "Sie sind in diesem Genre noch niemals so weit gegangen"<sup>92</sup>. Whether this is to be construed as positive or negative in implication is unclear, but it is a pertinent observation which remains true even in the light of subsequent works. The Etatsrat Sternow is depicted as a grotesque combination of human and animal. While the narrator confirms that he undeniably belongs to the species *homo sapiens*, he is known nonetheless as "die Bestie", and with his short legs and large head has a frightening, bear-like appearance. He is even capable of striking terror into the hearts of his own family, for it is reported that after giving birth to their daughter his wife died of shock on seeing him enter the room unexpectedly. As L.B. Jennings points out, however, what comes across here is a "forced, drastic humour which Storm reserves for uncanny and troubling things"<sup>93</sup>, and as the tale progresses the perverse and sinister aspects of his behaviour soon thoroughly wipe out any earlier suggestion of comicalness. His living-room is dominated by a macabre "altar" which has been personally designed and features the shape of the cross, at the foot of which lie the symbols of death, a skull and crossbones, carved "in abscheulicher Natürlichkeit" (III, 317). It is in front of this altar that he sits in the evenings, getting drunk on punch and singing and playing raucous student songs. In the words of Petersen: "Diese musikalischen Orgien mit der silbernen Punschbowle geben ein verflucht anschauliches Bild"<sup>94</sup>. The Etatsrat seems here to enact a monstrous parody of the Christian Eucharist, where reverent church music is replaced by a much coarser tone and lyric, and where the Communion wine symbolic of the blood of Christ shed to bring men to eternal life is replaced by a bowl of steaming punch which draws him further into the realm of darkness, for as he stares at the flickering candles on the altar playing with the shadows in the eye sockets of



the skull, he finds in the symbols of death "das Gewürz zu den Freuden des Lebens" (III, 318). In his inebriation his head begins to glow like a ball of fire, he gradually strips himself until he is sitting "in greuelvoller Unbekleidung" (III, 319), and eventually he falls on his back on the floor "gleich einem ungeheuren Roßkäfer" (III, 319) and struggles with his legs in the air until as always his secretary Käfer and his son Archimedes come and put him to bed.

A further grotesque ritual performed by the Etatsrat is that of the "Erdbad", a process which involves driving to the beach and being buried up to the neck in sand, perhaps, as the narrator suggests, with the assumption that he will benefit from the healing powers of Mother Earth. But here again we witness a mockery of Christian faith, a cynical imitation of death and resurrection which pours scorn on religious belief together with all the positive values which such belief embraces and encourages. Ingrid Schuster writes: "Im 'Etatsrat' findet sich nichts von Liebe und Barmherzigkeit . . . Er anerkennt nur die Macht des Todes"<sup>95</sup>. He is devoid of any spark of humanity: having neglected and scorned his son and daughter throughout their lives, he is totally untouched by their deaths. Incapable of remorse, he displays callous indifference as the mourners at Phia's funeral pass by his house, and as he luxuriates in his pipe-smoke, he repeats the sardonic phrase "contra vim mortis" - against the power of death there is no remedy<sup>96</sup>.

Schuster identifies in the demonic figure of the Etatsrat strong links with Magister Tinte in E.T.A. Hoffman's Märchen *Das fremde Kind*<sup>97</sup>, pointing out the ugliness, both of appearance and of character, which they have in common, and the manner in which they attack and destroy the happiness of the children who are their prey. While Schuster contends that Storm was directly influenced by this tale, however, she is obliged to concede that the ultimate triumph of good over evil represented by Hoffmann in the figure of the "fremde Kind" who overpowers the evil Magister Tinte and stays to protect the children from further harm, is missing in Storm. There is no one to challenge the menace of the Etatsrat, and his children are condemned to suffer and die pathetically and unavenged. *Der Herr Etatsrat* is therefore more than simply an "Antimärchen": rather, Schuster claims, it is "entlarvte Reatität"<sup>98</sup>, a chilling portrayal of the powers of darkness in the real world, wreaking havoc and

bringing tragic disaster to its helpless victims.

In many ways the Novelle is a "realistic" version of the Märchen *Bulemanns Haus* (1864). Bulemann, like the Etatsrat, is a misanthropic and greedy individual. As a pawnbroker he exploits the extremity of others, and he is unamenable even to the most desperate plea for mercy. He turns away his half-sister when she begs him to save her ailing son by returning to her a silver goblet supposed to have magic restorative powers for the one who drinks from it. Similarly the Etatsrat is without compassion for his son, refusing to pay for the education he deserves, and ultimately by failing to send the money necessary for proper medical care when he is ill, makes no attempt to prevent his death. Bulemann, however, is punished for his selfishness and inhumanity: dominated by his two cats who grow to monstrous proportions, he shrinks to the size of a year-old child, and instead of dying is forced to live "endlessly" as a wretched and shrivelled figure in the confinement of his bleak, empty house. But no such vengeance awaits the Etatsrat; he suffers no recompense for his bestial behaviour, and at no point in the Novelle is there any sense of poetic justice or of order restored. *Der Herr Etatsrat* therefore represents a significant progression from *Bulemanns Haus* in Storm's treatment of the grotesque. The "entlarvte Realität" of the later tale lies in the fact that in actual life evil often goes unpunished, that cruel and amoral conduct can result in tragedy for which there is no retribution. Storm asserted in his defence of the work to Heinrich Schleiden that the role of poetry was to be "ein concentrirter Spiegel des Lebens"<sup>99</sup>, and as such it had at times to reflect the harshness of reality. This he does in *Der Herr Etatsrat* in a manner which, although reminiscent of the grotesque fairy tale, far exceeds it in scope and tragic intensity.

One does not immediately associate Poetic Realism with the portrayal of the grotesque. Wolfgang Kayser in his work *Das Groteske: seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung*, writes of "die Verharmlosung des Grotesken"<sup>100</sup> during the post-Romantic period and points to the general assumption that in the later part of the nineteenth century "das eigentlich Groteske kaum zu finden sein wird und wir ihm höchstens in abgemildeter Form oder in Überlagerung mit anderen Gehalten begegnen"<sup>101</sup>. Although he does go on to consider some of the figures found in Keller and Raabe, his mention

of Storm is relegated to a single footnote in which he makes the sweeping assertion: "In harmloser Form . . . erscheint das Groteske bei Storm"<sup>102</sup>. It is incongruous, however, that the very quotation from Storm which Kayser uses in order to back this up refers directly to *Der Herr Etatsrat*, the Novelle with greatest potential to refute his case. He cites from a letter to Schmidt of September 1881:

Das moralisch oder aesthetisch Häßliche wird - wo es nicht zu einer gewissen Schreckensgröße aufsteigt, erst dadurch in Kunst, in specie Poesie verwendbar, daß der Künstler es im Spiegel des Humors zeigt, gleichsam es durch den Humor wiedergeboren werden läßt; dadurch entsteht das, was wir das "Groteske" nennen.<sup>103</sup>

Kayser accepts this statement at face value, apparently without entertaining the possibility that the *Etatsrat* may in fact be a much more serious and sinister character than these words suggest, and moreover without questioning whether a writer's claim to have infused a work with humour is sufficient to make the grotesque appear in a "harmless" guise. Storm penned these comments to Schmidt within a few weeks of the Novelle's publication, clearly in anticipation of the criticism which was likely to greet it, and thus his appeal to the supposed humour of the tale seems to have been part of an attempt to make its ugliness acceptable and to avoid the accusation that the Novelle had overstepped the bounds of propriety. In this light therefore it may be more helpful to interpret these often-quoted words not strictly as Storm's *definition* of the grotesque aspect of his writing, but rather as a veiled *defence* of it which, while appeasing the potential critic, also leads the indiscriminating reader to underestimate the work's serious and uncomfortable implications.

David Artiss in a brief article entitled "Theodor Storm und das Groteske" divides Storm's grotesque figures into two categories: firstly the "Phantastisch-Groteske"<sup>104</sup> of the Märchen, including figures such as the "Regentrude", the "Feuermännchen" in the same story, Herr Bulemann and Hinzemeier; and secondly the "realistic" characters from the later works described by Storm's first biographer Paul Schütze as "groteske Episodenfiguren"<sup>105</sup>, for instance Makler Jaspers in *Carsten Curator*, Madame Botilla Jansen in *Im Nachbarhause Links*, the vampire-like figure of Margret Glansky in *Draußen im Heidedorf*, Trin Jans in *Der Schimmelreiter*, and supremely the *Etatsrat* Sternow in *Der Herr Etatsrat*. Paying particular attention to Bulemann and the *Etatsrat* as the most powerful

representatives of these two categories, Artiss agrees with Ingrid Schuster in regarding these grotesque individuals as the embodiment of a negative social reality which needed to be exposed and challenged:

Es wäre also denkbar, daß es Storm hauptsächlich um die satirische Wirkung des Grotesken geht, darum, Mängel und Unzulänglichkeiten der Gesellschaft aufzudecken und durch eine komische Charakterdarstellung ein kritisches Bewußtsein für die sozialen Mißstände der Zeit zu wecken. <sup>106</sup>

Several other critics have pursued this line of interpretation, among them Margaret Peischl, who is, however, less generous than Artiss in accrediting to Storm the element of humour which he claimed to be of importance in enhancing the tale's effectiveness. Peischl suggests that Storm created in the tale "ein Zerrbild des politischen Wesens seiner Zeit"<sup>107</sup> in which the figure of the *Etatsrat* symbolised the Prussian state with all its vices. Eckart Pastor develops this idea at considerable length, basing his argument on Storm's well-known letter of 1868 to Hartmuth and Laura Brinkmann where he expresses his anti-Prussian sentiments in strong terms. Despite the thirteen-year interval between this letter and *Der Herr Etatsrat*, Pastor identifies significant parallels in the fact that Storm refers to the political system as the "Bestie", that he is filled with outrage at "die Vergewaltigung meines Heimatlandes" and at the "schnöden Ton des persönlichen Beliebens und der Herablassung"<sup>108</sup> typical of the Prussians. Moreover he draws attention to Storm's description of himself as a "freudloser Mensch", forced to suffer silently and suppress his true feelings, and sees in this an analogy to the distress endured by Phia, the *Etatsrat*'s daughter<sup>109</sup>. Thus Pastor confidently asserts that the entire work is to be regarded in a much broader sense as a satirical political allegory:

Zu vieles im Motivzusammenhang des Textes bricht aus dem puren Familienzirkel aus und verweist auf andere Dimensionen . . . Und so verkörpert dann der *Etatsrat* Sternow nicht nur die Vaterbestie, sondern auch eine despotische Staatsmacht, gewalttätig, arrogant und nur auf sich selbst bezogen - L'Etat c'est moi! <sup>110</sup>

Despite the ingenuity of Pastor's claims, however, they are somewhat far-fetched, and there is nothing in Storm's correspondence or diary entries concerning *Der Herr Etatsrat* to support such an interpretation. Storm's own comments indicate that the *Etatsrat* was meant to appear as a figure akin to Shakespeare's Falstaff<sup>111</sup>, albeit a more grisly variant. As Pitrou has it: "il a voulu dresser ici un

personnage shakespearien, mieux encore: dépasser Shakespeare dans l'horrible"<sup>112</sup>. Of the fact that the *Etatsrat* considerably exceeded Falstaff in monstrosity and frightfulness there is no doubt, but nonetheless Storm defended his creation in adamant terms, refusing to be intimidated by negative criticism:

Das moralisch und ästhetisch Häßliche ist von der Verwendung in der Kunst nicht ausgeschlossen; ja, es ist in gewisser Weise unentbehrlich; es kommt nur auf die richtige Vorführung desselben an; und daß mir die wie nur jemals etwas hier gelungen ist, muß ich wiederum in Anspruch nehmen. <sup>113</sup>

As we have already seen, it was to the humour of the tale that Storm appealed as redeeming it from the category of the offensive, expressing his view most clearly in a diary entry which reads: "Das ästhetisch oder moralisch Häßliche muß durch den Humor wiedergeboren werden, um in der Kunst verwandt werden zu können; dann entsteht das *Groteske*"<sup>114</sup>. When one considers *Der Herr Etatsrat* as an example of grotesque writing, however, the discrepancy between Storm's theory and practice becomes evident. There is little in this tale that is at all amusing; the *Etatsrat's* lifestyle is not a matter of light-hearted degeneracy, but of repulsive dissipation and unscrupulous self-centredness. It is a story of the frightening potential of alcohol to overpower and destroy, and written as it was with the reality of Hans' situation constantly in mind, any portrayal of the state of drunkenness carried with it for Storm no notion of entertainment<sup>115</sup>. As Böttger has it, "ein Laster, das das gesundheitliche und moralische Wohlergehen der Kinder zerstört und deren frühzeitigen Tod heraufbeschwört, ist nicht mehr bloß lächerlich, sondern hassenswert"<sup>116</sup>. The result of extending and surpassing the Falstaff idea therefore was that Storm, perhaps without intending to, sacrificed much of his own goal, and rather than producing a tale in which the uglier aspects were "durch den Humor wiedergeboren", created instead a bleak tragedy furnishing an insight into reality which was far from funny.

While it would easily be possible to devote many pages to an examination of the *Etatsrat*, so powerful and fascinating is his presence in the *Novelle*, it must be remembered that the action as such revolves around his children. As Storm pointed out, "hier kam es nicht auf des Vaters, sondern der Kinder Entwicklung durch jenen an"<sup>117</sup>. They are the tragic figures in the tale, the victims of their father's genetic endowment to them as well as of his gross neglect,

and it is with their situation and eventual downfall that we are chiefly concerned. At the point where the narrator takes up the tale, the Etatsrat's son Archimedes has already completed his schooling and proved to be very talented in mathematics. His father, however, has callously refused him permission to move on with his friends to university, keeping him at home instead to help with "untergeordneten Arbeiten seines Amtes" (III, 320). But despite his unhappy situation, Archimedes takes the initiative to increase his income by giving private tuition, and through this develops a firm friendship with the narrator who, although his pupil, is only a year his junior. He is portrayed at the beginning of the story as a kind and pleasant young man, "von guter und heiterer Gemütsart" (III, 319), who stands in a favourable light both as a friend and a brother. An early scene depicts him helping his sister Phia to solve a mathematical problem, and the closeness of their relationship is conveyed as he puts his arm around her and she rests her head against his, "als habe sie nun ihren ganzen kleinen Notstand auf den Bruder abgeladen" (III, 325). This touching picture affords a brief insight into the one object of special devotion and concern in his life, and lays the foundation for his numerous future references to her as he is troubled by nagging fears for her welfare.

In the narrator's description of Archimedes the only feature which he identifies as being inherited from the Etatsrat is his unusually large head. Yet as the tale unfolds, many other similarities manifest themselves, drawing attention to the inescapable genetic links between them. A case in point is Archimedes' tendency like his father towards the theatrical, seen for example in his melodramatic demeanour on the day which he calls "Aschermittwoch", namely the date at the end of the vacation on which his friends return to university, leaving him behind. He is found intently pacing the floor with his hands in his pockets, and then without a word of greeting to his companion who has entered the room he pronounces: "Asche, Asche, lieber Freund!" (III, 322), and with a sigh makes the sign of the cross. This exaggerated behaviour, unlike that of his father, makes an impression which is pitiful rather than threatening, but the general proneness to histrionics is clearly a family peculiarity through which both father and son seek to assert themselves and gain attention. A further link between Archimedes and the Etatsrat is introduced through the references to dancing. Archimedes is

described as having an "ebenso zierliches als winziges Körperchen mit lächerlich kleinen Händen und Füßen" (III, 319), a physique which, although lacking in manliness, enables him to become a nimble and polished dancer. This detail is interesting in the light of the fact that we are told his father was once mistaken for a dancing bear from the fairground, and on another occasion took over at his daughter's party in a state of drunken depravity, forcing the frightened girls to dance. In one respect therefore the Etatsrat's offspring is a more refined and socially acceptable version of himself, but at the same time it is also weaker and physically inferior, begetting a certain suggestion of effeminacy.

It would seem that Archimedes' personality is an amalgam of on the one hand characteristics clearly inherited from his father, and on the other of features which display the evidence of an unconscious counter-reaction to his father's dominance. Archimedes is so swamped by the forcefulness of the Etatsrat's overbearing presence that he is unable to develop his own individuality. His stylised language is marked by constant repetition: "trefflich, trefflich!" (III, 321, 337, 340, 342, 353) is his most frequent utterance, varied occasionally to "brillant, brilliant!" (III, 321), "vorzüglich, ganz vorzüglich!" (III, 342), "excellent . . . , ausnehmend excellent!" (III, 351), to quote but a few examples. Pastor describes this stereotyped method of communication as having "eine mechanische Echohaftigkeit, der alles Eigene, weil Einmalige, verlorengegangen ist"<sup>18</sup>, and he goes on to assert that this type of language, along with facial expressions dominated by "Offiziersaugen" (III, 343), "Kavaliersaugen" (III, 354), or "kriegerischen Augen" (III, 340, 321), together form a tortuously ritualised behaviour which acts as a self-defence mechanism, hiding the true person and creating an illusion of order and control where in fact there is none.

The deep-seated lack of balance and security in Archimedes of which at the outset there is only an obscure suggestion, begins to reveal itself more plainly as the story proceeds. It is at first in a "harmlos heiteren Ton" (III, 335) that Archimedes writes to the narrator, conveying to his friend his secret amusement at the fact that his father is unaware of his increased drinking habits. The narrator, however, lays the letter aside "nicht ohne ein Gefühl von Unbehaglichkeit" (III, 335), which prepares the reader for an account

of the inevitable road to ruin which lies ahead. Archimedes' dependence upon alcohol has begun to develop even before he goes to university, and so when he takes up his studies it is not long before he is drawn into the drinking fraternities, attracted not least by the sport and the scandal of their excesses. But the optimistic assumption on Archimedes' part that the new vista of opportunities opening up before him at university will at last mean freedom from his father, soon proves to be mistaken; for even though he may be able to escape from his father's physical presence, he can never escape the genetic legacy which is a ruthless reminder of the link between them and which comes most dramatically into evidence now that they are separated geographically.

Archimedes' attitude to his own profligate lifestyle is ostensibly a light-hearted one: dismissing his friend's fears as an over-reaction, he insists obstinately that everything is under control and pleads with him: "laß mich auch einmal, wie du es nennst, ein wenig toll sein; ich versäume ja nichts damit!" (III, 350). His intemperance, however, begins to take its toll upon his health as he pushes himself to extremes of physical exhaustion in order to keep up with his work, and moreover the allusion to "madness", employed at first by the narrator simply as a disapproving exaggeration, gradually reveals itself to be a serious description of Archimedes' growing mental imbalance. He shows a compulsion for purchasing expensive items which he does not need and can ill afford: pairs of compasses, old-fashioned rapiers and, most obsessively of all, patent-leather boots, "mit immer dünneren und biegsameren Sohlen" (III, 351). It is perhaps too fanciful to describe these boots with Pastor as "Fetische des Todestänzers"<sup>119</sup>, but on the other hand somewhat simplistic to claim with Tschorn that through them Archimedes seeks to gain acceptance and respect in bourgeois society<sup>120</sup>, especially since this scarcely accords with the information that "Archimedes war der einzige, der stets in Lackstiefeln tanzte" (III, 342). Rather it would seem that he surrounds himself with these material things in an attempt, however eccentric and irrational, to establish his individuality and attain an identity independent from that of his father. But despite all his efforts, this association with his father is something from which he can never free himself, and as his hereditary propensity to alcoholism with all its attendant excesses strains and shatters his weak constitution, his story comes to a



premature and pathetic end when, "wie ein kleiner abgezehrter Greis" (III, 351), he easily succumbs to a fever and dies wretched, lonely and impecunious.

Archimedes' final conversation with the narrator is devoid of all hope, marked instead by bitterness towards his father, disappointment with himself and above all profound distress at the plight of his sister Phia, the reality of whose suffering at the hands of Käfer he has only begun to suspect when it is too late. His poignant and searching question: "es hätte etwas aus mir werden können; nicht wahr, du bist doch auch der Meinung?" (III, 354), is one which his friend does not attempt to answer, perhaps simply because he feels it is pointless to talk about what might have been, or perhaps because on a deeper level he fears that the truth is too painful to contemplate. Looking back on the course of Archimedes' decline there is a sense in which the ultimate disaster might have been avoided if the narrator had been willing to intervene more forcefully in restraining his friend and helping him to find more constructive outlets for his energy. On the other hand, however, it would be both inappropriate and unjust to ascribe blame to any human agent if the hereditary forces at work within Archimedes were such as to render the outcome inescapable. The narrator identifies the warning signs and attempts to fulfil his duty towards Archimedes by alerting him to the danger, but since he is impervious to all advice, his friend has no choice but resignedly to record: "mir blieb zuletzt nichts übrig, als der Sache ihren Lauf zu lassen" (III, 350). There is therefore a fatalistic element to this tale which suggests that human intervention is fruitless where genetic constraints are concerned, an implication that the answer to Archimedes' vexed question on his death-bed is in fact a negative one, namely that he was doomed from the outset. In this respect *Der Herr Etatsrat* is one of the bleakest works that Storm ever wrote, avoiding any attempt at poeticisation and undeniably leaving the reader, as was Storm's intention, "in einer herben Nachdenklichkeit über die Dinge des Lebens"<sup>121</sup>.

While the development and the ultimate ruin of Archimedes occupies the position of central interest in the *Novelle*, the scene is changed periodically from the university setting to the home of the *Etatsrat*, thereby including the story of Phia, Archimedes' younger

sister, and thus broadening the tale of a disastrous father-son relationship into a family tragedy. Sophie Sternow is depicted from the outset as a quiet, innocent child with an air of vulnerability, exceedingly pale in complexion, but possessed of a unique inner beauty and charm. When the narrator first meets her she brings to his mind the mythical, elfin creatures known as "Willis", the pale-faced spirits of girls who have died before their wedding-day and are supposed to dance in the moonlight above their gravestones, luring any young man who passes by into a passionate dance of death. It is with these delicate and mystical beings that he continues to associate Phia throughout the tale, and his strange attraction to her springs from a mixture of fascination and pity. Despite her isolation and loneliness, living at her crude father's beck and call and spending many hours alone with neither mother nor friends to cheer her, she seems nonetheless to accept her lot and to be quietly content. When the narrator secretly observes her through the fence at the beginning of the tale, she is sitting in a tree making a garland of flowers, and later is to be seen wandering peacefully through the garden "wie in heimlicher Glückseligkeit" (III, 326). She is caught up in a world of her own imagination, as is revealed on the day when she is allowed to invite her schoolmates home and, sitting on the balcony overlooking the graveyard, recounts "so wunderbare Geschichten von den toten Kindern; . . . so reizend und so unbeschreiblich traurig!" (III, 328 f.).

For all her fancifulness, however, Phia is not merely a dreamy child, untouched by the reality of everyday living. On the contrary, she is acutely sensitive to the feelings of others and is marked by a deep generosity of spirit. This comes across for example when on the night of the ball organised by her brother she sits apart from the others beside an unattractive girl with whom no one wants to dance. Her brief explanation to the narrator: "Sie ist eine Fremde, . . . sie hat hier keine Freunde" (III, 347), is striking in its simple poignancy, for while no allusion to her own situation is intended, the parallel is clear nonetheless. The genuine unselfishness of Phia's nature is displayed most touchingly on the occasion of Archimedes' departure to university. For her this is in effect a devastating blow, meaning that she will lose the brother on whom she has always leant for support and will be left to cope alone with her father's crass and frightening excesses. But despite this she understands

Archimedes' elation at the prospect of joining his friends and being freed at last from his father's tyranny, and in her gratitude she even praises Käfer for his decisive role in the developments, calling him "den besten aller Menschen" (III, 338). It is unclear whether Phia has an inkling at this stage of Käfer's true intentions and suppresses this in order not to cause her brother concern, or whether the remark is made in complete ignorance and childlike trust, but whichever the case, it must be seen as bitterly ironic in the light of all that follows.

Because of the generosity and winsomeness of Phia's personality as it is depicted in the early part of the tale, it is therefore with unmitigated distress that the reader witnesses her inevitable fall into the clutches of a creature as vile as Käfer. She is helplessly passive in her suffering, an innocent victim who is unable to retaliate or even to call out for help, for in her unconditional love for her brother she would rather endure her fate in silence than cause him any pain. Moreover it is contrary to her sweet and self-effacing nature to complain or impute blame to another, which tragically renders it impossible for anyone to talk to her or alleviate her adversity. Despite the narrator's sympathy for her, she pleads with him in her anguish to depart, since she cannot bear him to see her wretchedness and shame. "Dank, Dank!", she cries, ". . . aber gehen Sie, aus Barmherzigkeit, gehen Sie jetzt!" (III, 359); and so with a heavy heart he leaves her to her "stumm getragenes ungeheures Leid" (III, 359), feeling as he steps out of the dark house into the sunlight that it is a tomb in which he has abandoned her.

Storm's portrayal of Phia as such a guileless victim, however, quickly provoked negative criticism. In November 1881 he wrote to Schmidt:

Freund Schleiden in Hamburg warf mir, von jenem engen Begriff des Tragischen ausgehend, vor, daß die "Phia" ganz ohne eigne Schuld untergehe; ich antwortete ihm: "Auch Ophelia mußte sterben und war lieblicher als sie." Diese absolute Forderung einer eignen Schuld erinnert eigentlich mehr an eine pädagogische oder polizeiliche Strafvollstreckung. Daß so zarte Wesen - auch ohne sichtbaren Kampf - *mit* in das große Triebrad des Verderbens fallen, muß ich für die Poesie in Anspruch nehmen. 122

Here Storm stresses again the point which he was at pains to make in the early 1880s and which we have already considered in Chapter Two, namely that moral guilt was unnecessary for tragic effect and

that innocent individuals could often be the victims of hostile circumstances over which they had no control. The comparison which Storm draws with Shakespeare's Ophelia may seem at first unusual, since the similarities in plot between *Hamlet* and *Der Herr Etatsrat* are few. When one pauses to compare the two women, however, several striking parallels can be identified. Ophelia, like Sophie Sternow, is young and inexperienced, and having lost her mother, has only her father and her brother to care for her. She is a sweet and affectionate creature whom we come to associate with the thought of flowers: she distributes them to others, they float around her in the brook where she drowns, and the Queen scatters them movingly on her grave with the well-known words, "Sweets to the sweet". Phia too belongs naturally in a garden setting surrounded by trees and blossoms: this is where she is found in one of the earliest scenes of the *Novelle*, carefully weaving a garland of flowers which she later places on her mother's grave. Attention is drawn again to her identification with flowers when in preparation for the ball the narrator sets great store on choosing for her a dark red rose which will complement her pale skin and dark hair: the fact that due to her inner turmoil she declines to wear the rose speaks symbolically for the tragic and violent loss of her former innocence and purity through the despicable schemes of her seducer. Whether Storm consciously modelled certain finer aspects of Phia's nature and situation upon Shakespeare's Ophelia we can but speculate, although certainly some element of affinity between the two is intended, conveyed not least in the similarity of the names. In terms of a general comparison, Phia and Ophelia have in common the fact that they are not major tragic heroines occupying the centre of the stage, but rather they remain gentle, secondary characters who become the defenceless victims of a tragic situation brought about by those more powerful than themselves. Their fate is doubly poignant in that their suffering and ultimate death are totally undeserved; they fall, as Storm puts it, "*mit in das große Triebrad des Verderbens*", and their tragic stature is grounded in their very grace and innocence.

On the issue of Phia's death there is a measure of disagreement among the critics. While most assume that she dies in childbirth, Hans Naue<sup>123</sup>, and more recently Eckart Pastor<sup>124</sup>, have asserted that she in fact kills both herself and her child. Pastor's analysis incorporates an allusion to the popular Darwinian idea of the

"survival of the fittest":

Unter der Gewalt werden die Schwachen zertreten; aber grausiger noch mag erscheinen, wie die Opfer selbst sich in das Räderwerk einfügen, wie schließlich gar die Schwachen die Gewalt gegen die noch Schwächeren kehren: der Erzähler, wenn er Archimedes und Phia fahren läßt; Archimedes, wenn er die Befürchtungen um die Schwester verdrängt; Phia selbst, die Schwächste der Schwachen, die das Leben ihres Kindes mit dem eigenen hingibt. <sup>125</sup>

Having made this observation, however, Pastor goes on to comment that Storm's work lacks the fundamental Darwinian conviction regarding the purpose of the struggle, namely that it is a struggle *for existence*, that it has a positive meaning or outcome. In contrast to this, Pastor argues, the chain of destruction in *Der Herr Etatsrat* is utterly gratuitous, and he seems to believe that everyone, not merely the Etatsrat, is guilty. While Pastor's point concerning the needlessness and futility of the suffering in the Novelle is a valid one, his assertion that "die Opfer selbst sich in das Räderwerk einfügen" is unsubstantiated and conflicts with Storm's statement that Phia "fällt nur mit in das grausame Triebrad hinein" <sup>126</sup>. The whole issue is made complicated by the fact that the episode of Phia's death is a classic instance of Stormian ambiguity. A description is given of the noise and confusion in the house of the Etatsrat, of the "Schrei, wie in höchster Not aus armer hilfloser Menschenbrust hervorgestoßen" (III, 361), but an account of what actually happens is carefully avoided:

Was in dieser Nacht geschehen war, blieb nicht lange verborgen; schon am andern Morgen lief es durch die Stadt; in den Häusern flüsterte man es sich zu, auf den Gassen erzählte man es laut: unter dem Dache des Herrn Etatsrat lagen zwei Leichen. (III, 361)

The deliberate ambivalence here leaves room for much speculation and debate. On the one hand it might be argued that Pastor's analysis suggests that Phia acts out of character: it implies that she is neither "zart" nor "lieblich" <sup>127</sup>, but rather that she shares the destructive tendencies of her father; that she is not a passive victim who bears her suffering with fortitude, but rather that she takes the law into her own hands and consciously joins the spiral of senseless brutality. The claim that she is guilty of both infanticide and suicide could thus be said to constitute a distortion of Phia's personality as Storm has depicted it, and render the tale even more horrific than it is already. On the other hand one might consider again the parallel with Ophelia and ask whether the similarities

between her and Phia extend also to the nature of their deaths. It is assumed that Ophelia's drowning is due not simply to an accident, but to suicide, although some shadow of doubt lingers. But by this stage her mind is already so scarred by the traumatic losses she has suffered that she is no longer responsible for her actions. Just as Ophelia, despite her ultimate deed of violence, remains sweet and innocent to the end, so too for Storm it might not have been inconceivable that Phia in her distraction should kill both herself and her child without any element of ugliness being introduced<sup>128</sup> or her tragic status being diminished. Since Storm himself chose to retain the ambiguity surrounding the precise circumstances of her demise, it is perhaps inappropriate to attempt a categorical interpretation. The point on which he insisted was that he regarded Phia as untainted by moral guilt, and this alone was important to him. In words similar to those already quoted from a letter to Schmidt, he wrote to Schleiden: "Ophelia, die noch lieblicher ist, als Phia Sternow, geht wie sie ohne eigne Schuld zu Grunde; und hier wie dort - der Rest ist Schweigen"<sup>129</sup>. Storm's quotation here of the dying words of Hamlet, "the rest is silence", indicates something of his indebtedness to Shakespeare in *Der Herr Etatsrat*. Not only did he derive from *Hamlet* inspiration for the character of Phia, but also reinforcement of his ideas on the tragic downfall of innocent individuals, and ultimately it is by appealing to Shakespeare's irrefutable authority that he produces the trump card to his opponents:

Wollen Sie die Fodrung stellen, daß die Poesie uns nur Erhabenes u. Erquickendes bringen solle; dann freilich ist der "Etatsrath" verloren; aber Shakespeares "Hamlet" mit ihm. 130

*Der Herr Etatsrat* is without doubt the darkest and most cheerless of all of Storm's Novellen. None of the other tragic works, even the most profoundly unsettling of them, plumbs the same depths of despondency. The misery of the tale is not relieved by the poeticisation of reality as in *Renate*, *Ein Doppelgänger* or *John Riew'*, and moreover the central figure in his blatant and ruthless egoism knows nothing of the sorrowful self-reproach of Carsten Carstens, the contrition of Hans Kirch, or the altruistic penance of Junker Hinrich, Franz Jebe or Hauke Haien. Unlike all of these figures he is totally unconscious of his own guilt, the atonement for which must be carried by his children and means an inexorable fate of desolation, pain and death. The *Etatsrat*, as the embodiment of everything

which is opposite to the true spirit of fatherhood and the epitome, as Böttger has it, of the "sich vollziehenden Verfall und Fäulnisprozeß der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft"<sup>131</sup>, represented for Storm the ultimate in the perversion and ravaging of family values. In June 1881 he wrote to Albert Nieß: "man hat von mir gesagt, die Familie sei die Domäne meiner Poesie; dieser 'Etatsrat' zeigt die Familie in der Zerstörung mit den tiefsten Schatten"<sup>132</sup>. Storm's choice of words here immediately calls to mind the cycle of poems entitled *Tiefe Schatten* which he composed after the death of his wife Constanze in 1865. These poems afford a penetrating insight into his reaction to the devastating power of death as he encountered it in an intensely personal way for the first time. The anguish, the loneliness and the despair which in these verses spring from an autobiographical experience emanate just as strongly from the lines of *Der Herr Etatsrat* some sixteen years later. Although the context is quite different, life which for Storm in his grief is expressed as "Öde, voll Entsetzen der Einsamkeit" (I, 187), is equally so for the children of the Etatsrat, and the comfortless following line from the same stanza: "Dort in der Ferne ahn ich den Abgrund" strikes home to the reader as he considers how well it describes not only Storm's private state of mind after Constanze's death, but also the fate of the helpless young victims of the Etatsrat on their path to inevitable destruction.

The "tiefe Schatten", however, which hang over Storm during his period of natural grief, are dispersed gradually as life goes on and as he works to hold his family together. But in contrast to this the "tiefe Schatten" over the lives of the Etatsrat's children become ever darker and more threatening. For them there is no release to be found in rekindled love, no return to normality and no hope for the future, only the prospect of increased suffering and eventual death. This reality is far removed from the one depicted by Wolfgang Frühwald in his article entitled "Der Enthusiasmus des Lebens". Writing of Storm's attitude to death he asserts:

Storms Darstellungen des Todes gelten der Erinnerung des Lebens, der letzten triumphierenden Regung der Lebensenergie gegen den Schatten des Todes, sie gelten der Totalität des individuellen Lebens, zu dem das Sterben, das Bestehen des Todesmomentes, als eine letzte große Aufgabe des Menschen gehört. <sup>133</sup>

Such a description might be seen to apply to Hauke Haien in *Der Schimmelreiter*, or possibly to Junker Hinrich in *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*, but other examples are difficult to find, and certainly with

no stretch of the imagination can anything of this be identified in *Der Herr Etatsrat*. For Archimedes Sternow death comes as a tragic and untimely end to a life which has gone out of control as a result of an inner, inherited imbalance; for his sister Phia it is a merciful release from a wretched and intolerable existence of servitude, sexual abuse and social ostracism. Here we witness Storm at his bleakest and most fatalistic, but also arguably at his most effective.

*Der Herr Etatsrat* is one of several of Storm's later Novellen which presents modern critics with a problem of classification. Laage describes it, along with *Der Schimmelreiter*, as "teilweise schon über den poetischen Realismus hinausweisend"<sup>134</sup>, pointing out that the ugliness it contains is suggestive of a Naturalist approach, while the description of the drunken Etatsrat writhing on his back on the ground like a dung beetle even anticipates Kafka's tale *Die Verwandlung*<sup>135</sup>. Böttger too contends that there is a discrepancy between the subject matter of the Novelle and the normal limitations of Poetic Realism: "Die Idee, die 'Familie in der Zerstörung' durch den Alkohol zu zeigen, war eben nicht mehr mit den Mitteln des gemäßigten bürgerlichen Realismus künstlerisch einheitlich durchzuführen"<sup>136</sup>. Our acceptance or rejection of this argument depends largely on our definition of Poetic Realism. If it is taken in a narrow sense to allow only the portrayal of the essentially positive, orderly and optimistic, then much of Storm's later work must be seen to belong to another category altogether. If, however, with Fritz Martini<sup>137</sup> we recognise that Poetic Realism does not exclude the representation of such darker strains of existence as the isolation of the individual and his subjection to irrational or fateful forces beyond his control which precipitate him into pain and death, then the content of *Der Herr Etatsrat* need not be regarded as transcending the scope of its period. This point is underlined by L.B. Jennings who writes:

If the bizarre outgrowths of an author's fantasy can be shown to pertain to acute and elemental questions of existence, that is all the more reason to esteem the work of such an author in an age weary of "real" trivia, wary of romantic fairy tales, and anxious for an art successfully synthesizing the two extremes - an art that does not forsake aesthetic unity and concerns itself with some reality more significant than the prosaic and external - in short, a "poetic realism" in the best sense. <sup>138</sup>

In conclusion to this chapter perhaps one further reference to



Shakespeare may be appropriate. There is a passage in *Hamlet* with which Storm was doubtless familiar, although he never referred to it; and which is strikingly relevant to the conception behind not only *John Riew'* and *Der Herr Etatsrat* but many of Storm's other tragic Novellen besides. Hamlet is speaking of the Danish tendency to drunkenness and of the way in which this has marred their national reputation to the extent that even their better qualities are dismissed by their critics:

So, oft it chanceth in particular men  
That, for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty,  
Since nature cannot choose his origin;  
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,  
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;  
Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens  
The form of plausible manners - that these men,  
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
Being nature's livery or fortune's star,  
His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,  
As infinite as man may undergo,  
Shall in the general censure take corruption  
From that particular fault. The dram of ev'l  
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt  
To his own scandal. 139

Here Hamlet's diagnosis of men's faults as being caused by fortune, heredity, or simply "nature's livery" - the human condition - bears a notable resemblance to Storm's ideas on "das Feindliche", "das Angeborene, dem nicht auszuweichen ist", and "die Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen, der Menschheit". The destructive propensities in man which are due to his genetic make-up render him guilty neither in the eyes of Hamlet nor of Storm, "since nature cannot choose his origin", but they drive him into a situation where tragically his virtues too are wasted. Anna Geyers in the Novelle *John Riew'* is an attractive and affectionate girl who can sew well and has good prospects; Archimedes Sternow in *Der Herr Etatsrat* is a highly gifted student and a born leader and organiser with vast potential, but each of them bears "the stamp of one defect", namely an alcoholic tendency inherited from their fathers, and thus from their very conception the formula for future disaster lies latent within them, and all their charm and talent will be of no avail against it.

At the beginning of this chapter and again at subsequent points, attention has been drawn to the fact that in Storm's work, just as in real life, there is a complex interaction between hereditary and environmental forces in motivating the behaviour of the individual,

the apparent consequence being that any attempt to categorise his tragedies into those of genetic and those of social compulsion must be somewhat arbitrary, if not indeed misleading. The monographs by Schuster, Ebersold and Böttger argue a persuasive case for regarding Storm as a man of strong social awareness whose criticism both of institutions and of attitudes undergirds most if not all of his creative writing. While these critics offer helpful insights and contribute much to our understanding of Storm, their work is however not free from bias, and moreover the deeper implication of their reasoning seems to conflict with the thrust of the present chapter by rendering redundant the idea of a tragedy of genetic compulsion. They suggest that, although the central problem in a tale may be due to a hereditary flaw, society, if it functioned as a true community, ought to be able to intervene and avert ultimate disaster. Thus in *Der Herr Etatsrat* the narrator is guilty of failing to move beyond "eine Art phantastischen Mitleids" (III, 326) into preventative action, and the Etatsrat's neighbours, who are well aware of what goes on but are disinclined to become involved, incur condemnation for being devoid of true compassion and as indifferent and cruel as the Etatsrat himself<sup>140</sup>. Although some element of social criticism was plainly intended on Storm's part, to infer that the outcome is wholly dependent on the behaviour of society is to cast in doubt both the inevitability and the tragic nature of the disaster. Furthermore it is not to take seriously enough Storm's conviction of the fateful power of heredity, brought home to him so painfully through his experience with Hans and often expressed in his correspondence and Novellen. *John Riew* and *Der Herr Etatsrat* both extend beyond the limits of the notion of heredity to explore other themes, the latter in particular encompassing many motifs and offering a broad scope for inquiry; but it is essentially as tales of genetic compulsion that they must be viewed, for it is through this fundamental problem of an inescapable, inherited propensity to alcoholism that the tragic catastrophe or series of catastrophes is motivated. We are reminded again of Storm's decisive statement of 1884 which leaves the reader in no doubt as to his belief in the bitter reality and inevitability of the tragedy of heredity:

Man sagte einmal: das moderne Schicksal sind die Nerven; ich sage: es ist die Vererbung, das Angeborene, dem nicht auszuweichen ist und wodurch man trotz ehrlichen Kampfes dennoch mit der Weltordnung im Conflict auch wohl zum Untergang kommt. <sup>141</sup>

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE TRAGEDY OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

(*Ein Bekenntnis, Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*)

Unsere Dramaturgen haben es mehr und mehr zu einem Fundamentalsatz erhoben, daß es ohne eine Schuld nicht geht - die Hinfälligkeit dieses Satzes kann nicht glänzender demonstriert werden als am "König Ödipus". In ihm waltet einfach das Verhängnis, und so gewiß jene Willkürtragödie verwerflich und unertragbar ist, in der sich nichts aus dem Rätselwillen der Götter, sondern alles nur aus dem *Car tel est notre plaisir* eines krausen Dichterkopfs entwickelt, so gewiß ist es anderseits für unsere Empfindung, daß die große, die echte, die eigentliche Schicksalstragödie unsere Schuldtragödie an erschütternder Gewalt überragt. Es ist der weitaus größere Stil. In dem Begreiflichen liegt auch immer das Begrenzte, während erst das Unbegreifliche uns mit den Schauern des Ewigen erfaßt. <sup>1</sup>

These are the words of Theodor Fontane, taken from a review of Sophocles' *King Oedipus* in 1873. They form only part of a memorable piece on the subject of moral guilt in tragedy, and apart from constituting a powerful statement of Fontane's opinion on the matter, offer a valuable insight into the predominant late nineteenth-century conception of tragedy.

The approach which Fontane finds so narrow and unattractive goes back to Greek models in which tragic calamity was sometimes seen to be the result of the retribution (*nemesis*) of fate or the gods for personal guilt such as *hubris* or *ate*<sup>2</sup>. This, however, as Fontane clearly states, was not the principal or only kind of tragedy, for disaster could also be motivated by the jealousy of the gods<sup>3</sup> or, as in *King Oedipus*, the intervention of the forces of fate, chance or necessity, factors which were free from any moral implication. Indeed, these were the circumstances preferred by Aristotle, who disliked plays in which virtue was rewarded and vice punished. Rather he regarded the pity appropriate to tragedy as being aroused by unmerited misfortune, and praised Euripides, "the most tragic of our dramatic poets", for his unhappy endings<sup>4</sup>. Even the tragic fault (*hamartia*) on which Aristotle insisted was less a moral explanation of the catastrophe than the artistic device which precipitated it<sup>5</sup>, and while the idea of retribution would not be removed entirely from any scenario occasioned by *hamartia*, it would not necessarily be in proportion to the moral deserts of the characters. A disavowal of belief in specifically moral guilt followed

by poetic justice is evident from Aristotle's emphasis on pity and fear, for these emotions are incompatible with the notion of sitting in judgement on the sufferer which the search for poetic justice demands.

The conviction, however, that the concepts of "judging" and "justice" were out of place in tragedy, was by no means universally shared. The Western, Christian tradition prevalent until the nineteenth century based its tragic art on the belief that calamity and despair come not from the universe but from man himself, that terrible disaster is the result of terrible sin. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English commentators criticised Shakespeare for portraying the downfall of innocent characters such as Ophelia and Desdemona, and for his failure to observe poetic justice. "Every Tragedy ought to be a very Solemn Lecture, inculcating a particular Providence, and shewing it plainly protecting the Good, and chastizing the Bad." Such was the emphatic pronouncement of John Dennis in the "Epistle Dedicatory" to his *Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* in 1701<sup>6</sup>. His words typify the attitude of many of his contemporaries who sought to justify the nature of the cosmos by arguing - with the friends of Job - that the innocent would be delivered and prosper, while the guilty would always be punished. Their demand that art should portray an impartial execution of poetic justice may not have been true to real life, where good and evil befall everyone alike, but it reflected a desire to illustrate the workings of divine providence and the popular but pseudo-Christian conviction of vengeance and vindication in the present world.

It is indicative of the situation in Germany that even as late as 1896 Alfred Biese should have felt it incumbent upon himself to produce an article entitled "Das Problem des Tragischen", in which he reviewed three recent school publications on the subject of tragedy<sup>7</sup>, and following in the steps of writers such as Fontane and Hebbel argued vehemently against the necessity still perceived by many to regard personal, moral guilt as a fundamental element in the motivation of tragic catastrophe<sup>8</sup>. The influence of Storm comes across clearly throughout the article, and at one point Biese directly acknowledges his indebtedness to the writer whom he so admired:

Ich mußte beim Lesen immer an so manches Gespräch mit dem

trefflichen Theodor Storm denken, der ebenso scharf und klar die ästhetischen Beziehungen durchschaute, wie er des Gestaltens mächtig war, mit dem ich so manches mal mündlich und schriftlich das Thema des Tragischen behandelt hatte, und der immer wieder auf den Satz zurückkam: die Leute wollen für die Tragik Schuld dh. speciell *eigne* Schuld des Helden und dann Buße. Das ist aber zu eng, zu juristisch. Wir büßen im Leben viel öfter für die Schuld des Allgemeinen, wovon wir ein Teil sind, für die der Menschheit, des Zeitalters, worin wir leben, des Standes, in dem wir oder mit dem wir leben, für die Schuld der Vererbung, des Angeborenen und für die entsetzlichen Dinge, die daraus hervorgehen, gegen die wir nichts vermögen, für die unüberwindlichen Schranken usw. Wer im Kampfe dagegen unterliegt, das ist der echt tragische Held. 9

These words are instantly recognisable as resembling Storm's well-known diary entries of 1881, and Biese was plainly familiar with the details of Storm's view on the issue. What Biese's article fails to reflect, however, is the fact that these quotations from Storm, although they constitute the most systematic pronouncements he ever made on his conception of tragedy, reflect a stance on Storm's part in the late 1870s and early 1880s from which he appears subsequently to have moved on. In 1881 Storm's comments were easily applied to the tragic Novellen which he had written to date, for until then the disasters he portrayed were motivated principally by a blemished society or a genetically blemished humankind. By his death in 1888, however, his earlier theoretical statements had to an extent been superseded, for four of the works he composed after 1881 differed radically from the others in admitting the possibility of a blemished individual. In *Hans und Heinz Kirch* (1882), *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* (1884), *Ein Bekenntnis* (1887) and *Der Schimmelreiter* (1888) the tragedy results not merely from irresistible forces with no moral implication, but chiefly from character, from some aspect of personal guilt. Hans Kirch is guilty of making unreasonable demands on his son and eventually of rejecting him and precipitating his death; Junker Hinrich murders his brother in a fit of rage; Franz Jebe administers a fatal dose of sedative to his suffering wife, having assumed the right to decide whether she should live or die, and Hauke Haien by his conscious negligence puts the lives of an entire community at risk from the force of the sea and indirectly brings about the deaths of his own wife and daughter. While the guilt of each of these characters may be viewed in the light of mitigating circumstances, the fact remains that the calamity results at least partly from factors within their control, and therefore that it is

fallacious to claim that all of Storm's work portrays the struggle of helpless victims against a hostile fate.

What these four Novellen demonstrate is that Storm's portrayal of tragedy is in fact broader than his own definition of 1881 suggests. His focus on moral guilt in these works represents a new development at the peak of his writing career which seems to indicate a change in his conception of tragedy, and indeed to Fontane or Biese, though they do not say it, may even have represented a regression. Such a development is puzzling, not only in that it contradicts the very point which he had previously been at pains to stress, but also more generally in that he was uncomfortable with the whole concept of personal guilt with its implicit demand for confession and atonement which smacked of institutionalised religion. Certainly it is not the case that a radical break can be identified with earlier ideas, since aspects of social and genetic compulsion still feature strongly in at least three of the four tales. Nor does Storm turn his interest exclusively to the tragedy of personal guilt in the final years of his life, for *Ein Doppelgänger* serves as a powerful example from this later period which is free from any suggestion of moral failing on the part of John Hansen. But the sudden predominance of a different approach raises the question to what extent Storm had seriously changed his mind with regard to the portrayal of personal guilt and the need for atonement or poetic justice. The present chapter will examine this question with particular reference to *Ein Bekenntnis* and *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*, these being the two about which least opinion has already been expressed by the critics.

#### Section A: *Ein Bekenntnis*

*Ein Bekenntnis* was published in October 1887, following *Ein Doppelgänger* of the previous year and preceding *Der Schimmelreiter* of 1888. Sandwiched between two works which commanded a greater degree of critical attention, it was largely ignored by the literary world, and little has been done since to redress the balance. This is the more surprising since the Novelle treats a controversial moral issue which is as relevant to contemporary society as it was a century ago, namely the subject of euthanasia. The Novelle bears considerable resemblance to Heyse's *Auf Tod und Leben* which

appeared in 1884 and also concerns the dilemma of a young doctor who is guilty of the mercy killing of his wife. Storm, who had already conceived a similar scenario before reading Heyse's work, temporarily laid aside his own plans. In January 1886 he wrote to Heyse: "ob ich mit meinem Zwillingsbruder Deines Motivs noch einmal etwas beginne, weiß ich nicht; es ist vorläufig noch ein Embryo"<sup>10</sup>. Finally in March 1887, after writing two other Novellen and suffering a five-month period of illness, Storm returned to his original idea. Despite the fact that he had deliberately not reread Heyse's tale and that the two works were palpably different in approach and outcome, Heyse was obviously unhappy with his friend's infringement of his subject matter, and his extensive criticism of *Ein Bekenntnis*, although justifiable in part, reveals the underlying tension between them. While Storm made appropriate alterations in response to some of Heyse's points, he remained firm in defending his own treatment of the subject:

Ich meine aber, daß Du meine Arbeit nicht ganz unbefangen gelesen hast. Dein Problem: "ob man einen Unheilbaren zum Tode helfen dürfe?" war nicht das meine. Ich wollte darstellen: "Wie kommt Einer dahin, sein Geliebtestes zu tödten?" und: "Was wird aus ihm, wenn er das gethan hat?"<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to Heyse's tale which ended on a happy, if somewhat superficial note with the remarriage of the doctor, *Ein Bekenntnis* plumbed much greater depths of loneliness and despair. Storm's Novelle was, as Schmidt put it: "[eine] ernste Durchdringung des Problems gegenüber der leichten Behandlung eines naheverwandten Motivs bei Heyse"<sup>12</sup>, and it was perhaps the truth of this distinction, occasioned by the fact that Storm's Novelle had exposed his own work to comparison and criticism, which caused Heyse the greatest annoyance.

The following is an outline of the story. On a summer visit to Bad Reichenhall the narrator Hans N. meets an old friend Dr. Franz Jebe, whom he has not seen since student days. Franz, who looks aged, grave and withdrawn, eventually opens up in response to Hans' friendly persistence, and invites him to his lodgings, promising to share with him the story behind the great burden that he carries . . . Franz tells how as a schoolboy he had a vision one sleepless night of a lovely girl about thirteen years of age, with fine features and pale grey eyes, who gazed at him with deep pity and longing. Convinced that this was no mere product of his fantasy, but rather a

revelation of deep significance, he cherished the memory of the girl throughout his years as a student. After qualifying as a doctor he soon was much in demand, but had no close friends except for a lawyer and his wife whom he visited regularly. One evening in their home he was introduced to a young woman named Else Füßli, whom he immediately recognised as the girl from his vision. Having fallen in love and married within a few months, they were both blissfully happy. Elsi's only weakness lay in the fact that she could not bear to hear of physical pain in others or to think of suffering herself, but she struggled to overcome this by visiting her husband's patients. After three years of unclouded happiness, however, Elsi became unwell, and on examining her Franz discovered evidence of a fatal cancer for which there was no known cure and which would cause her prolonged suffering. As her situation deteriorated Elsi repeatedly begged Franz to admit that she was dying and to release her from her physical agony. Eventually one day her distress was so great that Franz out of love and mercy administered the fatal dose for which she thanked him as she died peacefully in his arms. Soon afterwards a serious local epidemic drove Franz to consult the recent numbers of a medical journal which during his wife's illness had gone unread. But his attention was caught by an article outlining a new operation which was proving successful in the treatment of certain women with Elsi's condition. Franz, shattered by the realisation that his wife might have been saved, concealed his dreadful guilt from the world, but in his anguish determined that he must find a means of atonement. The subsequent recovery of one of his own cancer patients due to the application of the new technique served only to increase his sense of guilt for violating the sacredness of life . . . Having made this long confession to Hans, Franz disappears from Bad Reichenh~~all~~ the same night, leaving only a short note informing his friend that he has decided to spend the rest of his life in a distant land, using his skill humbly in the service of others. After an interval of thirty years the narrator receives a letter from a missionary in East Africa, containing the news of Franz's death after many years spent selflessly fighting disease in others. Enclosed is also a note of final farewell from his friend who knows that at last the end is near.

In the manuscript version Storm used both "Die Erzählung des Arztes" and "Novella medici" as temporary titles before reaching a



final decision. While the reasons for his hesitation to lay undue stress on the medical aspect of the work are plain, it is clear nonetheless from his correspondence that the medical details were thoroughly researched<sup>13</sup>. Arguably a most unusual place for a *Novelle* by Storm to be cited is in a medical textbook, but one leading gynaecologist of the day took the subject examined in *Ein Bekenntnis* seriously enough to mention the story in an article on cancer of the womb published in the *Handbuch der Gynäkologie* of 1899<sup>14</sup>. Obviously therefore the material was carefully and convincingly presented, and had an impact which Storm could scarcely have foreseen.

The medical world was not the only one to take an unexpected interest in *Ein Bekenntnis*. Perhaps even more surprisingly, the work surfaced several decades later in a political context. Many readers of Storm are aware of the way in which certain critics writing in the period of National Socialism exploited his work to promote the régime's ideology. What is little known, however, and is not mentioned even by modern commentators, is that in 1940, when Goebbels was minister of propaganda, a distinguished cast starred in a film based on *Ein Bekenntnis* entitled "Ich klage an!"<sup>15</sup>. The subtitle: "nach einer Novelle von Theodor Storm" was underscored in advertisements for the picture, thus vouching for the quality of its content. The plot was transferred to the present, and the disease was unnamed since cancer of the womb was no longer incurable. The final scene depicted the doctor who stood before the court, charged with the mercy killing of his wife, turning the tables on his accusers. "Ich klage an!" were the closing words of the film, as the doctor made his indictment against the court and the legal system which condemned his action. The film was therefore used - albeit unsuccessfully - as a positive presentation of euthanasia and as a psychological preparation for the killing of the incurable and insane. The fact that the message of the film was in direct opposition to the approach employed by Storm in *Ein Bekenntnis* was of course unknown to the great majority of its audience.

One of the reasons why *Ein Bekenntnis* has received little attention apart from these fleeting and unusual appearances in the medical and cinema worlds may lie in the fact that it is laden with problems for those who seek to penetrate beyond the most superficial

reading. Far from being a straightforward, rational portrayal of the progress of a young man's dilemma both before and after the act of euthanasia, the tale fluctuates between psychological realism and the dense symbolism of Romantic mysticism, with the result that the reader is never quite sure on what level to interpret it. The comments offered by the modern secondary literature on the *Novelle* are as varied as they are lacking in insight. Faced with the genuine difficulty of understanding and defining the work, a mixture of academic desperation and misguided ingenuity has extracted an array of analyses, not one of which seems quite to hit the nail on the head. The predominant approach, which assumes *Ein Bekenntnis* to be an uncomplicated example of realism, may elucidate some important points, but inevitably fails to achieve a convincing analysis of the motivation of the tragedy. On the other hand, however, the approach which identifies the sole key to the tale's meaning as lying in its numerous Romantic and mythological motifs ultimately lends inappropriate prominence to these aspects and effectively divorces the work from the realm of Poetic Realism. The following pages will examine the scope and limitations of each of these approaches, and then in the final section will attempt to demonstrate how insights gained from both avenues of inquiry need to be combined in order to produce a satisfactory interpretation of the tragedy.

#### A.1 The Approach from Realism

The student who is anxious to gain a deeper understanding of *Ein Bekenntnis* cannot be more poorly advised than to start by reading the comments of Fritz Böttger. The two pages he offers on the *Novelle* are an unfortunate example of literary criticism at its most unhelpful, and are perhaps best quietly ignored. For the purposes of this section, however, some benefit may be reaped from a brief consideration of Böttger's main assertions, inasmuch as this may serve to remove some basic misconceptions. The most implausible aspect of Böttger's analysis is his pronouncement that *Ein Bekenntnis* draws more heavily on autobiographical experience than any of Storm's other late *Novellen*. He sees Franz's idyllic relationship with Elsi as a poeticisation of Storm's marriage to Constanze, and Elsi's incurable illness and death as a parallel situation to Constanze's death by fever after her confinement. Apart from the fact that Constanze as a homely, matronly figure can have borne little

resemblance to Franz's elfin and ethereal partner, the comparison is inappropriate in that it overlooks the central theme of euthanasia and the whole ensuing question of moral guilt and atonement. Böttger goes on forcefully to assert that the path chosen by Franz of sacrificial service to humanity symbolises Storm's personal attitude to his life's work after the death of Constanze, and he draws to a conclusion with the words:

Die Novelle ist ein Bekenntnis zur sozial-ethischen Läuterung des Menschen im Sinne des Humanismus; nur im tätigen Leben kann er sich selbst vollenden, nicht durch Klagelieder über menschliches Irren, nicht durch fragwürdige Rechtfertigungen, nicht durch Erlösung von oben. <sup>16</sup>

Thus Böttger, by omitting any concrete reference to the details of characterisation or motivation in the story, succeeds in circumventing the intricate issue of guilt and reduces a complex tale to the level of a blatant treatise on behalf of atheistic humanism. While "atheistic humanism" may be a fair label for Storm's private world view, *Ein Bekenntnis* is one of the Novellen from which this assumption can least readily be derived. Böttger makes the sweeping claim: "alle menschlichen Gebrechen sühnt eine Tätigkeit im Dienste der Humanität. Das ist der Glaube, den diese Erzählung verkundet"<sup>17</sup>, but such a statement runs roughshod over the painful reality of Franz's attempt to atone. There is no suggestion that he ever attains a state of inner peace or freedom, and so a shadow of doubt is cast on the worth and efficacy of his efforts. In the light of the unanswered questions which remain at the end of the tale, it cannot convincingly be maintained that the Novelle proclaims the neatly parcelled message which Böttger would like to have his readers believe.

Even if Böttger's interpretation of *Ein Bekenntnis* is suspect, it retains a certain usefulness in provoking further thought and driving us back to a closer consideration of the text. From an early point in the story three characteristics can be discerned in Franz which are crucial in the development of events, namely his intelligence, pride and solitariness. In the narrator's description of him we read:

Er war einer von den wenigen, die schon auf der Universität von den Gleichstrebenden als eine Autorität genommen werden, was bei ihm, besonders hinsichtlich der inneren Medizin, auch von den meisten Professoren bis zu gewissem Grade anerkannt wurde. (IV, 198)

But rather than being admired or respected by this fellow students,

he is strongly disliked for his arrogant aloofness. One young man who makes a civil attempt to discuss a matter with him as a colleague relates how he met with a disdainful rebuff: "Mit einem herablassenden Lächeln sahen mich seine scharfen Augen an; der Zug um seinen schönen Mund wollte mir nicht gefallen" (IV, 199). It is not surprising therefore that Franz, whose favourite company since childhood has been tamed birds and animals (IV, 203), has few friends. His impressive medical knowledge has been gained from the study of corpses in pathology practicals, but he lacks either the ability or the inclination to communicate meaningfully with living individuals.

Given this tendency to shun human relationships, it may seem improbable that Franz should consider marriage. But, leaving aside for the moment the unusual circumstances of his encounter with Elsi which serve to make sense of his subsequent actions, he does indeed marry, and discovers hitherto unknown happiness. But when after some years Elsi becomes ill, the combination in Franz of intelligence, pride and solitariness, which is less accentuated during the idyllic period, comes again to the fore as a significant factor in his undoing. A specialist in women's diseases, Franz presumes he knows all there is to be known about Elsi's case. He turns to no one for advice or a second opinion, and even the latest journals seem a trivial distraction, and consequently go unread. This excess of introversion and self-sufficiency leads to a tragically mistaken assessment of the situation: in the firm belief that Elsi cannot be saved, he intervenes to bring her suffering to an end.

While Franz Jebe's pride in his intellectual superiority is referred to more than once in the course of the tale, and may be seen to constitute the tragic flaw of *hubris*, Ingrid Schuster's interpretation of his action in killing his wife is remarkably harsh: "Jebe scheint aus menschlichem Erbarmen zu handeln, in Wirklichkeit ist es die Vermessenheit des Übermenschen, die ihn zur Tat veranlaßt"<sup>18</sup>. Although an element of presumption is inevitably involved when anyone assumes the right to decide whether another should live or die, Schuster's rejection of the possibility that Franz acts out of pity for his wife is unmerited. Her emphasis on his arrogance - "Dem Übermenschen wird sein eigener Hochmut zum Verhängnis"<sup>19</sup> - does not accord with the picture painted in the

Novelle of his distress at the spectacle of Elsi's torment:

Ich war wie niedergeworfen von all den holden Geistern des Lebens: Liebe, Mitleid und Erbarmen waren dem Hülflösen zu furchtbaren Dämonen geworden; mir war, ich sei ein Nichts und nur bestimmt, das Elend anzuschauen. (IV, 230 f.)

For all his pride, there is little doubt of Franz's love for Elsi and of his desperate desire to alleviate her pain. Thus the poignancy of his own sense of inadequacy is obscured by Schuster's insistence upon elevating him to an "Übermensch". She identifies in his exceptional talent and accompanying social isolation "die Züge des gründerzeitlichen Genies"<sup>20</sup>, and even asserts that he bears messianic characteristics, but in doing so ignores other aspects of his personality and overestimates his status as a tragic hero.

Schuster seeks to justify her interpretation by appealing to the closing words of the narrator. Looking back on the painful process of Franz's atonement, he declares: "daß mein Freund ein ernster und ein rechter Mann gewesen ist, daran wird niemand zweifeln" (IV, 250), and Schuster comments in response to this: "Storm erkennt den willensstarken, genialen Einzelnen also durchaus an; in diesem Sinne huldigt auch er dem Geniekult der Gründerjahre. Den machthungrigen Übermenschen im Sinne Nietzches dagegen lehnt er ab"<sup>21</sup>. This statement, which might be legitimate in an analysis of *Der Schimmelreiter*, cannot be substantiated with reference to *Ein Bekenntnis*, for Schuster makes the mistake of equating the opinion of Hans the narrator with that of Storm himself. If we recall that Hans, as Franz's friend, has a certain amount in common with him, we cannot expect him to be thoroughly impartial. Therefore by employing as commentator on the action a narrator who is plainly meant to be seen as biased, Storm avoids making any moral judgements of his own. Schuster's conclusion, although she refrains from using terms such as "guilt" or "responsibility", appears to be that Franz Jebe is endowed with genius, but corrupted by pride: his fault lies in his arrogant self-reliance, and as a doctor he bears a responsibility to society for the terrible action resulting from this. But while such an interpretation is realistic and acceptable at least in outline, the details of her analysis indicate an exaggerated perception of Franz's tragic grandeur which, as we will proceed to consider, is inappropriate.

A more lengthy commentary on *Ein Bekenntnis* than those offered

by Schuster or Böttger is the one by T.J. Rogers in his book *Techniques of Solipsism*. Although his views are controversial, and he has been accused of the "wholesale misreading of the texts" which he sought himself to avoid<sup>22</sup>, nonetheless his views are both original and perceptive to the extent that they cannot easily be ignored. Rogers' interpretation of the story is based upon a ruthless examination of Franz Jebe's character: like Schuster he identifies Franz's brilliance and his arrogance, but it is in his solitariness that he distinguishes the fundamental motivation of the tragedy. He points out the fear of human relationships which Franz attempts to rationalise and conceal, and sees his obsession with the unreal, dream-like figure of Elsi who is the embodiment of his boyhood vision as the indication of "an impoverished personality, bent on wish-fulfilment and the evasion of real human action and experience"<sup>23</sup>. Thus Rogers regards Franz's fault as lying in his nature, not in any immoral deed. Although he does kill his wife, his "real tragedy (unknown to himself) is that he has never achieved a real human relationship with her or anybody else"<sup>24</sup>. In conclusion he writes:

His 'crime' is that he cannot face the demands of relationship with others . . . In short, solitude is 'punished' by solitude; to desire it is the crime, to be compelled to suffer it is the penalty. That is the nature of Franz's penance in Africa. <sup>25</sup>

While Rogers' analysis of Franz's situation is convincingly presented and is reinforced by frequent references to the text, it is questionable whether Storm would have favoured such a strongly unsympathetic approach to the central tragic figure. Some writers, it is true, are not good critics of their own work, and are perhaps not conscious of the full implications of what they create, but to turn pitiable human solitude and alienation, which as an inescapable universal problem was Storm's most painful lifelong preoccupation, into a "crime", must represent a serious misunderstanding of Storm's intention.

In spite of the disputable elements in Rogers' investigation, however, he displays a deeper insight than most other commentators in recognising at least part of the significance in the supernatural content of the tale. Unlike Stuckert, who laments the fanciful inclusion of the apparition-scene as "ein Fehler", "ein fremder Geist", a feature that is "für das Verständnis der eigentlichen Novelle keineswegs notwendig"<sup>26</sup>, Rogers identifies the way in which the

magical, uncanny side of Franz's relationship with Elsi is conveyed throughout the story and must radically affect our interpretation of his character. It is in supplementing the observations about Franz which we have already drawn together with an appreciation of this fantastical aspect of the story - the extent of which even Rogers only begins to perceive - that the clue to a balanced understanding of *Ein Bekenntnis* is hidden. Without exploring this fully, even the conscientious, text-based efforts of Rogers lead to a distorted picture. We will move on therefore to examine these areas of the bizarre and the symbolic in the tale, the merit and consequence of which Böttger, Schuster and Stuckert have failed to see, and whose commentaries are inevitably inadequate and misleading as a result.

#### A.2 The Approach from *Märchen* and Myth

A passion for the combination of realism and the irrational is a distinctive element of Storm's work, and comes across nowhere more forcefully than in his two final Novellen *Ein Bekenntnis* and *Der Schimmelreiter*. Yet his skilled portrayal of the interplay between strong-willed, enlightened individuals and mysterious, daemonic forces which contributed to *Der Schimmelreiter* being hailed as a masterpiece, brought nothing but criticism for *Ein Bekenntnis*. It was Franz Jebe's "vision" of his future wife at the beginning of the story which generated the most vociferous complaint. Heyse described it to Keller as "das ganz aus dem Blauen hereingeschneite visionäre Exordium"<sup>27</sup>, having already expressed his opinion to Storm in equally emphatic, if more polite terms:

Jenem [dem Arzten] imputiren wir auch das visionäre Element, das dem Charakter des hellblickenden Naturkundigen fremd sein sollte, zumal es mit dem Verlauf der Geschichte nichts Wesentliches zu schaffen hat. Ich würde dringend rathen, diese Partie in der Buchausgabe zu streichen. Sie erweckt Erwartungen, die nicht erfüllt werden.<sup>28</sup>

Storm conceded in reply that Heyse's argument concerning the expectations aroused by the vision was valid, and assured him that he had been "im Verfolg bemüht gewesen, dieß abzuschwächen"<sup>29</sup>. But it was a much more radical treatment of the problem that Heyse had intended, and he responded urgently:

warum soll die visionäre Vorgeschichte stehenbleiben, wenn Du selbst erkannt hast, daß sie da nicht hingehört! Wie leicht ist sie herauszuschälen; bei der Operation fließt nicht ein Tröpfchen Blut, und Du hast die Composition um einen unkünstlerischen Nebenschößling erleichtert, der nicht bloß überflüssig, sondern

störend war.<sup>30</sup>

Storm's reaction to this displayed an ambiguous mixture of determination and defeatism: blaming his old age in a letter to Schmidt<sup>31</sup> and underlining the work's weakness by repeating Heyse's objection in part word for word, he chose nonetheless to ignore his friend's advice. His original conviction had been that the mystical element "besonders für die Charakterisirung der Frau gut zu passen schien"<sup>32</sup>, and feeling that it was too late to turn back, he left the work virtually unchanged. Apart from the fact that Storm was strongly attached to the idea of the vision since it was based on an experience from his own childhood<sup>33</sup>, his decision to proceed regardless of criticism was motivated largely by the fact that he knew the piece of surgery proposed by Heyse would not be as quick and painless as it seemed. For rather than constituting a single, easily removable event, the mystical aspect of the story in fact permeates and deeply affects the whole. It is significant that the references in *Ein Bekenntnis* to Franz Jebe's interest in the works of Perty and Daumer<sup>34</sup> "über die dunklen Regionen des Seelenlebens" (IV, 199) are in fact autobiographical. Storm possessed a personal copy of Daumer's *Das Geisterreich in Glauben, Vorstellung, Sage und Wirklichkeit* (1867), and his interest both in *Märchen* and in all aspects of the fantastic and paranormal is well attested<sup>35</sup>. Stuckert therefore makes a similar mistake to Heyse when he describes the mystical and Romantic facets of *Ein Bekenntnis* as "stilfremde Formelemente"<sup>36</sup>. Foreign though they may be according to a strictly theoretical definition of Realism, they represent the quintessence of Storm's approach and are inseparable from his particular brand of Realism. As Jan Terpstra points out, there is a "Märchensubstrat"<sup>37</sup> which runs throughout the tale, encompassing a complexity of allusions to Hoffmann, Eichendorff, and in particular to Fouqué's *Undine*. Only when it becomes clear that it is essentially in the development of these motifs that the unity of the work is founded can any wisdom be discerned in Storm's determination to go his own way against seemingly good advice.

The reader is informed early in the story that Franz Jebe is characterised not only by his academic brilliance and by his arrogance, but also by "ein von wenigen bemerkter phantastischer Zug" (IV, 198). This therefore, together with the mention of his



attraction to the writings of Perty and Daumer, paves the way for the otherworldly experience which is to follow. The vision takes place from the high window of a dark peat-storage room at the top of a deserted outhouse, and Franz recounts in detail his labyrinthine route through the "unendlichen Rummelei von seit Jahrzehnten verödeten Fabrikgebäuden mit finsternen Kellern, Kammern voll Spinnweben . . . und unzähligen, sich übersteigenden Böden" (IV, 203). In preparation for Franz's ghostly encounter with the "Genius des Todes" (IV, 206), as the young girl is described, the imagery here is of the kind pointed out by L.B. Jennings who notes that frequently in Storm's work "death is associated with bare rooms in remote corners of houses and with the climbing of stairs or the passage through a series of rooms and doors or through a dark corridor"<sup>38</sup>. Having arrived in his dream in this eerie room and climbed up on crates to the window, the scene which develops before his eyes in the courtyard below is laden with the imagery of death. The setting is autumnal, the trees half stripped of their foliage, and the pale waif who appears in the mist wearing an ash-grey, shroud-like dress is surrounded by the debilitated figures of boys which are the spirits of those who have succumbed to a recent local epidemic. These pages are a vivid example of Storm indulging his penchant for evoking scenes from the dim and ghostly reaches beyond rational understanding.

The strength of Storm's roots in the Romantic movement comes across unmistakably in the vision episode: in true Romantic tradition, the hero encounters a mysterious female being who has a profound effect upon him, and the occasion forms the prelude to a sequence of strange and wonderful events. The similarity to the vision in E.T.A. Hoffman's *Das öde Haus* is too great to be coincidental. Storm has the words:

aus den feinen durchsichtigen Zügen ihres Antlitzes blickten ein Paar lichtgraue Augen unter dunklen Wimpern in die meinen, unablässig, sehnsüchtig, als sollte ich sie nie vergessen; und mit unsäglichem Erbarmen blickten sie mich an . . . "Wer bist du? Was willst du, Holdseligste, die ich jemals erblickte?" (IV, 205)

and in Hoffmann we read:

Wie aus dünnen grauen Nebeln trat nach und nach ein holdes Antlitz mit wehmütig flehenden, blauen Himmelsaugen . . . hervor . . . "O du holdes Zauberbild", rief ich voll Entzücken, "o du holdes Zauberbild, tu es mir kund, wo du weilst, was dich gefangen hält? - oh, wie du mich so voll Wehmut und Liebe anblickst!" 39

Again, although it is a common idea, a possible parallel can be identified between Franz's words: "eine verzehrende Wonne überkam mich, ich hätte unter diesen Augen sterben mögen" (IV, 205) and the reaction of Florio, the hero in Eichendorff's *Das Marmorbild*, when he parts from the entrancing Frau Venus:

Die unbeschreibliche Schönheit der Dame, wie sie so langsam vor ihm verblich und die anmutigen Augen untergingen, hatte in seinem tiefsten Herzen eine solche unendliche Wehmut zurückgelassen, daß er sich unwiderstehlich sehnte, hier zu sterben. 40

For Franz there is no suggestion that what has taken place is a mere product of his childish fantasy, and convinced of its deep spiritual significance, he guards his secret "gleich einem heiligen Keim" (IV, 208). Thus his deep excitement at the import of his experience is presented with all the emotion and quasi-religious hyperbole typical in the description of a genuine Romantic hero.

Franz's story quickly passes over the years up to the autumn evening, reminiscent of the night of the vision, when his long-awaited meeting with Else eventually takes place. The "geheimnisvoller Schrecken", together with "die Empfindung eines schicksalschweren Augenblickes und eines betäubenden Glückes" (IV, 210) with which he is overcome heralds a new density of Romantic and mythical allusions. Else is introduced to him by his friends as the great-niece of the artist Heinrich Füßli (1741-1825), master of daemonic painting whose famous and disturbing work *Der Nachtmahr* (1781) hung in reproduction form in Storm's own home and is mentioned not only in *Ein Bekenntnis* (IV, 209), but also in the autobiographical piece *Von heute und ehemals* (IV, 424 f.). The fact that Elsi is related to such a redoubtable figure inspires a sense of wonder and mystery, and is only the first of an array of increasingly enigmatic connotations which surround her. As Franz expresses his enraptured reaction at meeting her in the words: "mir war, als habe ein Dämon, der meinige, sie, wer weiß woher, hier in das Haus meiner Freunde gebracht" (IV, 210), the *Undine* motif, which is developed strongly throughout the tale, already begins to emerge. Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *Undine* (1811), the Romantic *Märchen* of the water-sprite who marries a mortal with tragic results, was well known and liked by Storm<sup>41</sup>. Undine, whom in Fouqué's *Märchen* the knight Huldbrand meets in the home of an elderly fisherman and his wife, was the incorporation of a mythical nature-spirit who achieved

the longed-for link between innocent, unreflecting nature and conscious, human mind. According to folkloric tradition it was only through marrying a mortal that an elemental spirit could obtain a soul or experience any other human emotions such as love or sorrow, even though such a union, for all its mysterious ecstasy, would also be fraught with danger. A similar idea is alluded to elsewhere in Storm's work: in *Hans und Heinz Kirch*, for example, the grocer's little boy says: "ich will auch eine Wasserfrau heiraten, wenn ich groß geworden bin!" (III, 401), but Heinz warns him against it; and in *Der Schimmelreiter* Trin' Jans tells Wienke a fairy story about a "Wasserweib" who is unable to pray, but then breaks off her tale and describes such creatures as "Undinger, die nicht selig werden können" (IV, 350). These, however, are only passing references, and it is unquestionably in *Ein Bekenntnis* that the motif is developed to fullest effect.

Storm's fascination for the arcane is revealed in characteristic manner in the ensuing description of Franz's wedded bliss with Elsi. He tells his friend the narrator:

Ich hatte nun mein Nachtgespenst geheiratet . . . es war ein Glück! - oh, ein Glück! - - Ich hatte einst den Fouquéschen Ritter Huldbrand beneidet, wie er mit einer Undine seine Brautnacht feiert; ich hatte nicht gedacht, daß dergleichen unter Menschen möglich sei. (IV, 211)

Just as Huldbrand, however, is troubled after his marriage ceremony by a sense of Undine's non-human characteristics and by the suspicion that "er sei an eine Fey oder sonst ein bösllich neckendes Wesen der Geisterwelt angetraut"<sup>42</sup>, so too Franz is puzzled as to his wife's true identity. "Es war so manches Eigene, Fremdartige an ihr" (IV, 211), he says, ". . . als stamme es aus andern Existenzen" (IV, 218), and on one occasion he voices his bewilderment in the question: "bist du eine Undine, eine Elbe, eine Fee? Was bist du eigentlich?" (IV, 212). This mystified inquiry is prompted by the sight of Elsi, which is uncannily repeated in identical manner over a series of days, walking in the garden with a butterfly in her hair and followed by a snow-white cat. The recurrent images of Elsi in the garden encompass a powerful cluster of motifs, some of them ambivalent, but all suggestive of her link with a distant, unknown realm. The butterfly has numerous associations in mythology and superstition; often it functions as the embodiment of the soul, but it also symbolises death, and in Friesland is commonly connected with

witches and the devil<sup>43</sup>. The white cat is referred to by Franz as "das Tier der Freia" (IV, 212), the Nordic goddess of love whose chariot was supposed to be drawn by cats, but a sinister element is introduced by the colour white which, as with the "weiße Alp" in *Draußen im Heidedorf* and Trin' Jans' cat and Hauke Haien's horse in *Der Schimmelreiter*, signify the sphere of death and daemons. On another occasion Franz finds Elsi walking between the trees, "wo sie . . . die Fäden der über den Weg hängenden Herbstgespinste auf ein zusammengelegtes rosa Kärtchen wickelte" (IV, 218). Here the ancient activity of spinning brings to mind the pursuit both of elves and of the goddess Freya, and the mythological allusions are strengthened in the same scene by the reference to Elsi's protection of a large toad, a traditional fairy-tale animal with secret powers of transformation, and associated again with the domain of spirits and witches<sup>44</sup>. Thus these garden settings, apparently simple and idyllic on a superficial level of interpretation, in fact conceal a complexity of motifs evocative of a deeper spiritual world and charged with premonitions of death.

Despite their initial happiness, Franz and Elsi are not spared long from the portent of future pain. Elsi faints one day on hearing an account of the suffering of one of her husband's cancer patients, and later confesses that she has never experienced affliction of any kind. In her distress she says to Franz: "sollte in Wirklichkeit mir das bevorstehen, . . . ich weiß, . . . die Angst würde mich töten" (IV, 215), and her fear prompts in Franz the assurance of his protection from any such anguish. As will become clear, Franz's response here to his wife's extremity may be seen as reminiscent of a parallel situation in Fouqué's *Undine*, where Huldbrand is made to vow that he will never curse his wife on or near a body of water. If the condition is broken, Undine will have to return to the domain of the elemental spirits, for even as a human being she remains under their power. Although it is not such a solemn oath which Elsi elicits from Franz, it is nonetheless with an awareness of his undertaking to protect her from pain that he carries on. Even if at first he cannot envisage the later dilemma in which his promise will place him, it will prove crucial in determining his future action.

Further suggestions of the otherworldly aspect of Elsi's nature abound in the ball scene which marks a final high point in their

marriage. The simple grey dress which she wears accentuates her unusual beauty, and serves as a powerful reminder of the magical creature of Franz's boyhood vision. "Holde Elfe" (IV, 219) and "meine schöne Elbin" (IV, 220), Franz calls her, and when he dances with her not only do his feet seem to gain wings, but at times her very lightness fills him with fear, "als könne ich sie nicht halten, als müsse sie mir in Luft zergehen" (IV, 220). Just as Undine the water-sprite returns and merges again into her own element, a presentiment of death is expressed here too as Elsi, Franz's "Luftgestalt" (IV, 208), threatens to fly away and dissolve sylph-like into the air. D.S. Artiss has pointed out how the death of a main character in Storm's work is frequently foreshadowed by a scene of dancing and festivity, and indeed the ball scene in *Ein Bekenntnis* reveals an interplay of motifs between an exhilarating dance-of-life and an ominous dance-of-death similar to those found in *Auf dem Staatshof*, *Auf der Universität*, *Der Herr Etatsrat*, *Im Nachbarhause links* and *Ein Fest auf Haderslevhuus*.

The sense of foreboding is confirmed and intensified some time later when Elsi, suddenly announcing her conviction that she and Franz must have experienced a mystical encounter a long time before, also expresses her fearful premonition: "wir müssen doch wieder voneinander!" (IV, 223). As her fatal cancer is diagnosed and her suffering increases, the possible truth of her prediction becomes a terrible reality for Franz. Watching her in her anguish, he is reminded of his undertaking to protect her from pain, and his perplexity deepens as she repeatedly begs him to release her. Her agony is conveyed graphically in the words: "wie von Dämonen, die aber kein sterblich Auge sah, fühlte sie ihren Leib in meinen Armen geschüttelt" (IV, 230), thus suggesting an image fearfully like the one in Füll's *Nachtmahr* with which a sinister link has already been established. The painting portrays a gruesome incubus on the body of a defenceless girl, with the head of the death-horse looking in from between the curtains, and is laden with an uncanny significance in the tale which emerges only much later in the references to "Dämonen" and "unsichtbaren Folterer" (IV, 228). When Franz finally decides to act, and administers the fatal dose of sedative which will free Elsi from her physical torment, he watches her as her pain subsides, and as she turns her face towards him in peaceful gratitude, at the moment of death she appears to him as

indistinguishable from the girl of his vision so many years previously:

es mag ja Täuschung gewesen sein, mir aber war es, als sah ich in das Antlitz meines Nachtgesichts, wie es einstmals verschwindend von mir Abschied nahm; jenes und meines Weibes Züge waren mir in diesem Augenblicke eins. (IV, 231)

With the death of Elsi it might be assumed that the mystical element will disappear from Franz's life, that with her must die his obsession, together with any further allusion to the supernatural. Certainly it is true that reality deals him a heavy blow when he learns that there might have been an opportunity to save her, and he is overwhelmed by the seriousness of his hasty misdeed in offending against the sacredness of life. The tragedy of his situation, however, lies in the fact that he was bound to incur guilt on some level, as well as being bound to lose the one he loved. If he had ignored Elsi's pleas for mercy and allowed her pain to continue, he would have been unfaithful to his promise and, if the Romantic parallel to Fouqué's *Märchen* were carried through, would have lost her as Huldbrand lost Undine. But by being true to his word and taking the only road which seemed available, he eliminated all future possibility of saving her and became guilty of her murder. Just as Elsi's death is open to interpretation on two different levels, namely in realistic terms as a case of euthanasia, and in Romantic terms as the inevitable return of the magical creature to her elemental domain, so too does ambivalence surround the subsequent course of Franz's life. It may seem to the world that after a period of intense and unresolved grief Franz's decision to atone for his guilt by committing the rest of his days to self-denial and lonely humanitarian effort is an uncharacteristic and unexpected one. But if one examines again the account of his boyhood vision, there is more than a suggestion that not only Franz's marriage to Elsi, but also the pattern of events to follow it was predicted from the beginning and was the inevitable outcome of their mystical union.

We recall in particular the strange fact that the girl had looked at Franz "mit unsäglichem Erbarmen" (IV, 205), as if she could foresee grievous circumstances of which he was yet unaware, and that his spellbound reaction to the mysterious figure had been the wish to die under her gaze. It is not until after Elsi's death that the full ironic significance of these details emerges. In his crippling

consciousness of his guilt, Franz slips progressively into a world inhabited only by himself and his departed wife: "ich hatte das Verhältnis zu den Menschen verloren; mein Innerstes war eine Welt für sich" (IV, 237). Oblivious of the urgent need of a town ravaged by epidemic, he maintains his isolation and his indulgence of his grief. The eventual reproach of his friend, who describes his behaviour in the light of others' extremity as "Frevel" and his physical appearance as "übel . . . , als ob du dein Leben ganz der Toten hingegeben hättest" (IV, 237), unwittingly sums up the reality of the situation. But although Franz rallies at length and offers a positive service to the community again, his apparent recovery is deceptive, and belies a state of inner torment. The return to health of his patient the Etatsrätin Roden, who undergoes an operation for the same complaint as Elsi, serves only to magnify his awareness of his guilt, and his rejection of the opportunity for a remarriage with her daughter Hilda is indicative of his continuing obsession with the memory of Elsi.

Something of this predicament is captured by Tilo Alt when he describes Franz in *Ein Bekenntnis* as reechoing the situation of Reinhard in *Immensee*, for both find themselves "in a state of suspended animation, wherein the present is only bearable as a relived or remembered past"<sup>45</sup>. Franz's personality and circumstances of course are different from Reinhard's, and Franz at least possesses the resolve to act decisively and to embark upon a process of atonement, but his action is still deeply rooted in and motivated by past reality. Hilda Roden in her full-blooded vitality with the loving understanding and physical comfort she could offer is in every way the opposite of Elsi; but while the reasons he gives for renouncing her may sound noble - "pfui, pfui! Dies edle Geschöpf zum Mittel einer Heilung zu erniedrigen, es würde nur ein neues Verbrechen sein!" (IV, 246), the truth is that he is bound by a mixture of lack of courage and unwillingness to break with the past. Unlike Huldbrand, who leaves Undine for a real human relationship, Franz remains faithful to his dream. But his lonely penance in Africa brings him no consolation. He refuses to take refuge either in suicide or in religious faith, and after thirty joyless years of service to others, eventually feels the approach of death as a relief. His original wish from the distant night of the vision to die under Elsi's gaze is maintained obsessively to the end: as he looks forward to

"das Tor zur Freiheit" (IV, 249), he hopes that the hand to open it will be hers.

### A.3 Synthesis

Thus we are left with the vexed question of responsibility. Having considered the approach from realism, do we conclude that Franz through pride, presumption or self-sufficiency commits a serious moral offence for which his conscience demands due penance, in other words that we have here a conventional tale of "Schuld und Sühne"? Or, on the other hand, in the light of the approach from *Märchen* and myth, do we assume that poor Franz, who always did have a "phantastischen Zug" is, if the expression be pardoned, simply "away with the fairies" and his act of killing Elsi a classic case of diminished responsibility? Or does the answer lie in a synthesis of the two approaches, whereby Franz is to be seen as a rational, intelligent and proud individual who cannot be exonerated entirely, but whose guilt is modified by the fact that he comes mysteriously under the spell of someone who is both human and elemental spirit at once, and is obsessed by her to the extent that he must sacrifice much of his future freedom?

In examining this issue an important point to remember is that in *Ein Bekenntnis* Storm was not primarily interested in the moral problem as such. He had written to Heyse:

Dein Problem: "ob man einen Unheilbaren zum Tode helfen dürfe?" war nicht das meine. Ich wollte darstellen: "Wie kommt Einer dahin, sein Geliebtestes zu tödten?" und: "Was wird aus ihm, wenn er das gethan hat?" Auf diesem einfachen Wege fanden sich die beiden Thatfachen ganz natürlich ein: die Erschwerung seines Bewußtseins durch die, jetzt so merkwürdig stimmende, von ihm übersehene Möglichkeit einer Heilung; und - die Abweisung einer sich nahen wollenden neuen Liebe. <sup>46</sup>

Abstaining from moral judgements, his aim therefore was to delve into the motivation behind such an action and then to portray the decisions and responses stemming from a guilt-ridden conscience. Having said that, it would be false to suggest that the question of guilt itself is blithely ignored, for Franz's self-indictment in the words: "Mörder! . . . o allweiser Mörder!" (IV, 236) indicates not only a perception of the seriousness of his deed - namely that he has committed murder - but also sufficient self-knowledge to recognise his own *hubris*. The fact remains that there can be a difference



between objective guilt and guilt *feelings*, but rather than embroil himself in making such distinctions, Storm subtly moves the focus of attention away from specific personal guilt to something much more abstract when he subsequently has Franz say:

Daß ich meiner Elsi den Tod gegeben, während ich nach dieser neuen Vorschrift vielleicht ihr Leben hätte erhalten können, das liegt nicht mehr auf mir; es ist ein Schwereres, an dem ich trage - so mühselig, daß ich, wäre es möglich, an den Rand der Erde laufen würde, um es in den leeren Himmelsraum hinabzuwerfen. . . . Das Leben ist eine Flamme, die über allem leuchtet, in der die Welt entsteht und untergeht; nach dem Mysterium soll kein Mensch, kein Mann der Wissenschaft seine Hand ausstrecken, wenn er's nur tut im Dienst des Todes, denn sie wird ruchlos gleich der des Mörders! (IV, 246)

Franz Stuckert deserves credit for being the only critic with the courage to attempt a serious interpretation of these lines and of the few pages that follow, but his analysis is confused by his assumption that the work incorporates both Christian and non-Christian ideas. He asserts that in Franz's attitude to the need for atonement "der protestantische Grundzug Storms"<sup>47</sup> can be discerned, and that this is portrayed with a "beinahe biblischen Realismus"<sup>48</sup>; but earlier he has described Franz's offence against "die Heiligkeit des Lebens" (IV, 246) as constituting metaphysical guilt<sup>49</sup>, in apparent ignorance of the fact that this concept is foreign to Christianity. For all the religious vocabulary that *Ein Bekenntnis* contains, it in fact embraces nothing of the true Christian outlook, and the understanding of guilt that it conveys is much closer to that of secular humanism than of Christianity. Franz chooses to reject the "Weg des Heils" (IV, 249) made possible through the atonement of Christ, insisting instead on finding his own atonement - "soll eine Sühne sein, so muß ich sie selber finden" (IV, 237) - and thus typifies the unregenerate self-sufficiency that must earn its own salvation. But contrary to the optimism of Böttger, the humanistic, atheistic alternative is not presented with any confidence. Despite all his efforts, Franz never regains a sense of wholeness or of freedom, and the story ends on a deeply poignant but unheroic note of futility and human alienation.

In *Ein Bekenntnis* Storm therefore raises questions of the most profound and searching nature concerning human guilt and the possibility of atonement, while at the same time carefully refraining from moral judgements. The *hubris* of the tragic hero cannot be overlooked, but Storm moves the emphasis away from personal guilt by drawing strongly on a heritage of Romantic and mythological

motifs, and thereby opening the tale to a level of interpretation in which Franz is curiously entangled with paranormal powers and his responsibility is significantly reduced. Even if, as we have seen, the *Novelle* reflects little of Storm's autobiography, it is an unmistakable product of his personality, revealing his predilection for mixing realism with mysticism, and mirroring too in the figure of Franz his private position of unwillingness or inability to take a blind step of faith. The story is also a product of its time: it is one of "Schuld und Buße", full of Stormian loneliness and insecurity, rather than of "Schuld und Sühne" in the classic Schillerian sense where the hero dies inwardly free. In this and in other respects it resembles *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* which will be the subject of the next section.

## Section B: Zur Chronik von Grieshuus

"Den Boccaccioschen Falken laß' ich unbekümmert fliegen und verliere mich romantisch zwischen Wald und Heidekraut vergangener Zeiten"<sup>50</sup>. These are the words of Storm to Keller in September 1883, shortly after beginning work on the manuscript of *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*. They indicate how even at this early stage he had in mind a substantial work which would not adhere strictly to the formal requirements of the Novelle as postulated by Heyse<sup>51</sup>. While composing *Schweigen* a year previously, the ideas for another story were already firmly in his mind, as a letter of 1882 to Heyse reveals:

Zum Troste habe ich zwei Concepte; und sie durch die mit Blaustift geschriebene Bezeichnung "Psychol. Novelle" und "Romantische Novelle" [bestimmt]; während ich nun die erstere schreibe, liebäugle ich mit der andern. <sup>52</sup>

But although the prospect of this "romantische Novelle" had been tempting and exciting, the process of writing it turned out to be altogether different. The narrative was divided into two parts, each presenting its own particular difficulties, and progress was painfully slow. Having committed "ein leidliches Stück" to paper, Storm wrote to Schmidt: "Es liegt noch lang u. episch vor mir; mir wird mitunter etwas bedenklich bei der Sache"<sup>53</sup>. His struggles with certain scenes in Book One, however, were minor in comparison to the extensive revision required in Book Two, and he even recalled the manuscript from the publishers in order to make further alterations. In June 1884 he lamented to Keller that he was still going round in circles<sup>54</sup>, a week after writing to Mommsen:

Jetzt habe ich . . . noch einen Kampf mit dem zu bestehen, vor dessen Nähe Gras und Laub verdirbt; d.h. ich habe das zweite Buch einer guten Geschichte . . . noch einmal umzuarbeiten. Ich fürchte aber, daß ich das Spiel verliere. <sup>55</sup>

Storm's dissatisfaction and lack of confidence lingered for some time after resubmitting the work to Westermann, his chief concern being that the second book was inferior to the first, "weil darin sich die Scenen nicht mit so dramatischer Nothwendigkeit eine aus der anderen ergeben"<sup>56</sup>. But Heyse's unqualified praise on reading the remainder of the tale was sufficient to put his mind at rest, and in due course positive responses came in also from Jensen, Keller, Tönnies, Fontane and others. "Meine literarischen Freunde wollen es zu meinem Prinzipalstück machen"<sup>57</sup>, Storm wrote in December to Nieß, and was plainly gratified at this "ganz ungeahnten Erfolg"<sup>58</sup> after expending such effort to deal with the many problems.

The tale may be summarised as follows. The narrator begins by recalling his boyhood walks on the heath where the ruined remains of Grieshuus could still be seen, and recounts how his fascination with the great house and the family that inhabited it prompted him to undertake some research. Fifty years later, as the "Chronist von Grieshuus", he tells the tale which he has reconstructed.

Book One: in the mid-seventeenth century the Junker of Grieshuus has twin sons. Hinrich, the elder, is interested in hunting and in the upkeep of the estate, while Detlev, the younger, follows more intellectual pursuits. During the "Polackenkrieg" an accountant comes with his daughter Bärbe to settle near Grieshuus. One day their home is attacked by marauding soldiers and Hinrich, who is hunting close by with his dogs, hears the girl's cries and rushes to rescue them. Following this Hinrich and Bärbe fall in love, and while Detlev becomes engaged to a suitable young lady from the aristocracy, Hinrich determines to flout convention and disregard his father's wishes by marrying Bärbe. Both their fathers die within a short time, and they marry hastily, but the Junker's will reveals that the manor, which ought rightfully to have been Hinrich's, falls to Detlev. Hinrich is enraged at Detlev's offer of the house on the condition that he abandons Bärbe, and his wife seeks in vain to calm him in his violent resolve to fight for his rights. Some time later, on the twenty-fourth of January, Hinrich returns home to find his wife seriously ill, having given birth prematurely to a baby girl. Her confinement was brought on by the arrival of a letter declaring their marriage legally void, for due to her father's status as a serf she could not marry without Detlev's permission. Hinrich in his fury rides out to intercept his brother on the heath, and murders him. On the same night Bärbe dies, and Hinrich disappears.

Book Two: in Hinrich's continuing absence his daughter Henriette is raised in a convent, and eventually marries a Swedish Colonel. She gives birth to a boy named Rolf, but dies a few years later, reminding her son that his grandfather will return. The Colonel moves with Rolf to Grieshuus, which for many years has been uninhabited. He teaches the boy to ride, and provides for his education by employing a tutor, Magister Caspar Bokenfeld. It is he who now takes up the account. The estate has become overrun by wolves, and one day Rolf narrowly escapes an attack. As they are discussing the situation, a stranger of mysteriously noble bearing arrives with his dogs, seeking employment as "Wildmeister" to

eradicate the problem. He develops a close relationship with Rolf, and some years later, on the night when the last wolf is shot, the boy at last recognises the man as his grandfather; but Hinrich leaves Grieshuus the next day. Rolf in due course goes to Stockholm to join the Swedish Dragoons, and Bokenfeld takes on a village pastorate. In January the war in which Rolf is engaged approaches the vicinity of Grieshuus, and he sends word of his imminent arrival. But on the night of the twenty-fourth the young girl Abel, who has grown up with Rolf and is secretly in love with him, arrives at the gates with urgent tidings: the Russians, whom Rolf and his men do not expect to arrive for several days, plan to attack that same night, and so Rolf must be warned. At that moment the aged Wildmeister reappears, and is the only man willing to ride out on this night which according to local superstition is fated. He sets out on Falada, Rolf's spirited horse, but is thrown off and killed on the very spot where Detlev had died, and the riderless horse gallops on into the skirmish, distracting Rolf's attention and bringing about his death from a Russian lance. Hinrich's true identity is revealed to all the people, and he is buried with Rolf, the last of the generation, in the family grave.

The story therefore is one of guilt and atonement: Book One portrays the events which culminate in Hinrich's murder of his brother, and Book Two focuses on certain episodes from his ensuing lifelong attempt to expiate his crime, ending with his death and the termination of his noble lineage. The secondary motifs are familiar ones in Storm's work, namely heredity, class distinction, human alienation, the threat of violence from nature (embodied in the wolves) and from man himself (conveyed in the background of war), and the inescapable reality of transience and death. Fritz Böttger describes the work as a "Doppelnovelle" in which the first book relates "die Geschichte eines Bruderzwistes" and the second constitutes a "Heimkehrer-Novelle"<sup>59</sup>, but the problem with such a sharp distinction is that it detracts from the unity of the whole. When Heinrich Schleiden commented in Storm's own day on the division within the work, the author's reaction was adamant and unequivocal:

Du übersiehst dabei, daß diese Theilung nur eine äußere Einkleidung ist; dem Wesen nach könnte die Novelle auch heißen: "Der Junker" - oder "Junker Hinrich von Grieshuus". Das Ganze ist durchaus einheitlich: That und Buße! <sup>60</sup>

So from these words it is clear that Storm regarded everything else in the tale as subsidiary to the central theme of guilt and penance - a theme which Böttger's analysis characteristically fails to acknowledge - and that he saw this thread as being the one which links the long saga into a coherent whole.

So particular was Storm about the manner in which others interpreted his work that even his admirers failed to please him if they did not highlight that which he himself considered of primary importance. Fontane, for example, wrote to him:

Dieser langweilige Wahltag soll mich nicht abhalten, Ihnen den gestern Abend feierlich beschlossenen Dank der ganzen durch "Grieshuus" unter Thränenwasser gesetzten Familie F. auszusprechen. Es zählt zu Ihren schönsten Arbeiten und in der Kunst der poetischen Scenerie, der unendlich reichen, immer wechselnden Situationsmalerei - ein *Genre-Bilderbuch* ohne Gleichen - ist es wohl das Schönste was Sie geschaffen haben. Storm hoch! <sup>61</sup>

But despite the enthusiasm and generosity of Fontane's praise, Storm was unhappy with the description of what was for him a serious tragic work as a "*Genre-Bilderbuch*", and stressing among other things the unity of the tale as he had already done to Schleiden, he responded:

Ein paar Proteste habe ich noch gegen Sie. Ein Bilderbuch ist es wohl kaum zu nennen, da alle einzelnen Szenen, aus dem Centrum herausgeschrieben, nur Strahlen eines Ganzen sind . . . Dann noch eine Frage. Ich dachte, der Schluß von Buch I würde *erschütternd* wirken? An Thränenwirkung hatte ich auch beim 2ten Thl. nicht gedacht. <sup>62</sup>

The sentiment expressed here echoes Storm's earlier statement of 1876 that his tragic writing was worthless if it was merely "rührend" and not "erschütternd"<sup>63</sup>, and indicates that he regarded *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* as belonging clearly to the more powerful and ambitious of his tragic works. Much time could be spent pursuing the numerous lines of inquiry which the story affords. Robert Pitrou, for example, has examined the case for viewing the work as a novel rather than a *Novelle*<sup>64</sup>, and interesting research has been carried out more recently by K.E. Laage into Storm's literary sources for the meticulously prepared historical background to the tale<sup>65</sup>. The present chapter, however, must be limited to an appraisal of the motivation of the tragic catastrophe which Storm saw as "erschütternd" and to a consideration of the process and significance of Hinrich's penance. These issues of "That und Buße" were for Storm the central ones, and are also of greatest relevance to the

present study.

Storm's deliberate choice of the neutral word "That" instead of "Schuld" as we might expect, is thought-provoking for this chapter where our attention is focused on the idea of personal guilt and the question of its presence or absence. Just as in *Ein Bekenntnis* this issue is complicated by the inclusion of supernatural elements, so too in *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* the presentation of events is not free from ambivalence. This indeed was Storm's avowed intention, as is clear from his comment to Heyse: "ich kämpfe jetzt selbst mit solchem zu deutlich werden, zu direktem Losgehen"<sup>66</sup>. Moreover, if we examine the wording of the first idea - "ein kleines italienisches Motiv von fünf bis sechs Zeilen"<sup>67</sup> - which sparked off the composition of the Novelle, it is obvious that from the outset Storm was working with a concept in which the original aspect of personal guilt had been obscured by local superstition and a belief in the dark powers of fate:

Dr. Mannhardt, der viel in Italien gelebt, erzählte mir: ein dortiger Marquis habe ihm einmal mitgeteilt, bei seinem Gute wohne ein Einsiedler; aber er müsse ihm alle Jahr auf einige Tage im Gute Quartier geben, weil dann die "schlimmen Tage" seien, wo es nicht gut da draußen sei.

Ich fragte Mannhardt: "Woher kamen denn diese Tage?"

"Ich glaube", sagte er, "ein Brudermord oder so etwas war der Grund."

Das war der Perpendikel-Anstoß. Ich glaube, es ist jetzt gut schleswig-holsteinisch. <sup>68</sup>

The "Einsiedler" from this anecdote becomes Hinrich, who returns to Grieshuus in Book Two disguised as the "Wildmeister" and asks permission to move from the tower where he normally lodges into the manor itself during the "schlimmen Tage" surrounding the twenty-fourth of January. This of course is the date on which he murdered his brother decades previously, and on which the local population believes the ghost of Detlev stalks the heath, seeking a victim for revenge. But rather than portraying this belief merely as base, groundless superstition, Storm chooses instead to construct around it the climactic chain of disaster at the end of Book Two: Hinrich and Rolf both meet their deaths on this fateful night, and so the superstition is apparently verified.

The significance of the "schlimmen Tage" in Book Two poses serious questions for our understanding of the work, for it is a motif reminiscent of the *Schicksalstragödie*, a theatrical form which in the

words of J.M. Ritchie "combines all the external trappings of Romanticism - dreams, premonitions, curses, daggers, castles, involved relationships, strange crimes - with a primitive concept of fate derived from a complete misinterpretation of Greek tragedy"<sup>69</sup>. The first critic to identify a similarity in this respect was Otto Brahm, who wrote in a review of the work for the *Deutsche Rundschau* in March 1885:

die ganze Generation [geht] an forterbender Schuld zu Grunde; . . . seine Fabel ist vollkommen durchsichtig, das Ende sehen wir früh vor Augen, und nicht das Was des Geschehenden, nur sein Wie kann zweifelhaft sein. <sup>70</sup>

Brahm reinforces his argument by citing a couplet from Zacharias Werner's *Der vierundzwanzigste Februar* (1809), probably the best-known *Schicksalsdrama*. But despite the fact that Storm was familiar with this work, and even attempted to obtain a copy of the original while working on *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*<sup>71</sup>, the twenty-fourth of January was a genuine historical date taken from one of the local chronicles which he used as source material for the *Novelle*<sup>72</sup>, and therefore the number was not simply a blatant aping of Werner's title. It cannot be said of *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* that the characters are dominated by an oppressive fate which allows them no freedom of action, and Albert Köster stressed this point in his firm rejection of any suggestion that the link with Werner's work was more than a superficial one:

Auch nur der leiseste Versuch, die *Novelle* in die Welt der *Schicksalstragödien* zu rücken . . . , muß abgewiesen werden. Denn bei Storm greift kein *Fatum* geheimnisvoll und erdrückend ein, sondern jede Handlung geht aus den Charakteren hervor. <sup>73</sup>

The motif of the "schlimmen Tage" therefore is employed for its atmospheric effect, symbolising, as Stuckert has it, "den überindividuell wirksamen, im Grunde unbegreiflichen Vollzug des Schicksals"<sup>74</sup>, but not predetermining the course of events as such.

While it is necessary, however, to repudiate the notion that *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* is a direct imitation of the *Schicksalstragödie*, it cannot be denied that fate in various forms has a significant role to play. In Book One of the tale a hostile fate is manifested through the class prejudice of the old Junker and his son Detlev, whose ruthless actions in opposing Hinrich's relationship with Bärbe contribute to the ruin of his happiness and incite him to violence; and in Book Two, as will be discussed later, the war also may be seen as an instrument of fate. Thus the question is inevitably raised



to what extent Hinrich may be regarded as personally responsible, or whether external forces are entirely to blame for the tragic catastrophe. This is the issue which will occupy our thoughts for the remainder of the present section, as we examine the character of Hinrich and the nature of the circumstances against which he is set, in an attempt to ascertain whether, or in what respect, *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* may be described as a tragedy of personal responsibility.

Junker Hinrich is characterised at the beginning of the story as an attractive, energetic figure, of noble bearing and sharp-eyed like an eagle, who thrives on the outdoor pursuits connected with the upkeep of the estate, enjoys a good relationship with the servants and country people, and in every respect is fitted to be the future heir of Grieshuus. His one fault, however, is his temper. The baptismal verse given to the twins as babies: "Blessed are the meek" (Matthew 5; 5), seems to have been chosen in vain, for prone to violent outbursts of anger, he can quickly lose all self-control. Once he strikes his servant Hans Christoph severely for an oversight that leads to the injury of his dog, and on another occasion beats the same dog to death for refusing to pursue a wolf, something which is against its nature since it is only accustomed to hunting light game. But each time Hinrich is subsequently overcome by remorse and a profound sense of responsibility: after confessing to Bärbe his brutal act of killing the dog, she tells him never to do such a thing again, and he responds fervently: "Nein, nein, so Gott mir helfe; man müßte mir denn ans Leben wollen!" (III, 525). Thus Bärbe in her gentleness and simple integrity encourages in Hinrich the values of humanity and restraint.

While Hinrich's love for Bärbe brings him deep happiness and soon becomes his greatest priority in life, it is bound nonetheless to lead to bitter family conflict as his father and brother feel the security of their aristocratic ancestry threatened by the intrusion of a social inferior. As the narrator describes the Junker of Grieshuus:

wie er dafür gerühmt worden, daß er seinen Akker nicht verunkrauten lasse, so hat er auch mit lebender und fast mit toter Hand gewehret, daß sein adeliges Blut sich nicht an dem gemeinen roten Blut verfärbe. (III, 507)

Hinrich's stubborn persistence in his determination to marry Bärbe results therefore in the sacrifice of his birthright as his father

leaves Grieshuus to Detlev, and he is forced to settle with his bride on the nearby "Meierhof". But despite the idyllic scenes conveying their wedded contentment, the injustice of their situation gnaws at Hinrich's inmost being. All the potential for an unhappy outcome lies in the fact that his unconditional love for Bärbe and his natural urge to enter into his rightful inheritance as overlord cannot co-exist. "Du hast zu hohen Preis für mich gezahlt" (III, 541) is the poignant expression of Bärbe's conviction as she watches her husband in his brooding resentment, but he lovingly silences her with a reassurance of his commitment: "Nein, nein; laß fahren, Bärbe! Ich zahlte für mein Leben; weh dem, der das mir anzutasten waget!" (III, 541). His words, however, are bitterly ironic in the light of what is to come, for little does he realise how soon his "life" in Bärbe will be snatched from him, and how ultimately he himself will have to endure greater earthly woe than the one who initiates the evil action against him.

One Sunday Hinrich defiantly registers his claim to Grieshuus by occupying the pew reserved for the lord of the manor, thus forcing Detlev and his fiancée who arrive later to retreat from the church. And so the battle over rights intensifies, as Hinrich insists on what is legitimately his by birth, but Detlev tries to annul it by tacit appeal to the traditional prerogative of the family to close ranks against the member who offends against its social rules. Detlev's tactics in exploiting a loop-hole in the law to declare Hinrich's marriage void are cold and calculating, and even if Bärbe's death as a result of the shock and the premature delivery of her child is not the intention, it is scarcely regretted. Hinrich's response by contrast is hotheaded and unconsidered, as his fiery temper takes control and he kills his brother in a frenzy of hatred and despair. The implication is not, however, that Detlev is the arch villain of the piece, solely to blame for the catastrophe, and that Hinrich is exempt from personal responsibility for what is essentially a crime of passion. Instead Detlev is portrayed as a shadowy and secondary figure: although he is more fully drawn than his counterpart Junker Wulf in *Aquis submersus*, he is to be seen likewise as the representative of his class, embodying the hostile fate of pressure to conform to a rigid social code, rather than as personally guilty for causing Hinrich's plight. He has after all no genuine interest in Grieshuus, for the practical demands of running an estate do not

correspond to his talents in academic and court matters, and besides he harbours no particular grudge against his brother. His merciless actions are prompted entirely by the values on which he has been raised: like his father, his aristocratic pride is intense, and he will do his utmost to prevent family disloyalty. Storm does not sanction his behaviour any more than he does that of Junker Wulf: indeed the strength of his antipathy towards the arrogance of the nobility is plainly conveyed in his earlier comments on *Aquis submersus* where he decries the

Übermut jenes Bruchteils der Gesellschaft, welcher, ohne Verdienst auf die irgendwie von den Vorfahren eroberte Ausnahmestellung pochend, sich besseren Blutes dünkt, und so das menschlich Schöne und Berechtigte mit der ererbten Gewalt zu Boden tritt.<sup>75</sup>

But for all the serious repercussions of Detlev's role in the proceedings, the implication is that his mentality is determined by his upbringing, and therefore his personal guilt is not the issue at stake.

With Hinrich, however, the matter is altogether different, for Book Two focuses to a large extent on his perception of his guilt and his lifelong attempt to atone for it. The sympathetic observer may regard his crime as mitigated by the fact that the sudden death of his wife, the one around whom the entire meaning and content of his life revolve, is bound to result in an uncontrollable outburst of the rage to which he is already prone. But Hinrich does not seek refuge in excuses, and faces squarely what for him are the inevitable consequences of his guilt. The words "unstet und flüchtig sollst du sein auf Erden!" (Genesis 4; 12) which he quotes near the end of his life indicate how he identifies himself with the figure of Cain, the post-Eden man capable of tremendous heights and appalling depths, city-builder and murderer (Genesis 4; 8, 17). Like Cain he is deeply lost, exiled from his native soil, entangled in his guilty past and plagued by the restlessness resulting from a heavy conscience. Thus, having already been stripped by Detlev of his love, his rightful home and his identity as ruler, Hinrich imposes upon himself as the penance for his crime of fratricide a lonely life of servitude and strict self-discipline. But more wretched even than Cain, who is marked in some way by God to protect him from being killed himself (Genesis 4; 15), Hinrich has no such reassurance of mercy. He is portrayed after his return to Grieshuus in Book Two as a repentant

figure who spends the time around the anniversary of his brother's murder reading his Bible; but he seems to find no solace in divine forgiveness, and reveals his continuing inner torment by leaving his food virtually untouched.

The Hinrich who returns after generations as a servant to his ancestral home is thus a chastened character. Gone are his former irascibility and his determination to fight for his rights, and the positive values of love and faithfulness for which he stood out in his youth are complemented now by a new humility and an awareness of man's terrible potential for evil. On one occasion he has to restrain Rolf, who plainly has inherited his grandfather's violent temper, from brutally punishing his disobedient dog. "Erschlag nicht deinen Hund!", he cries in urgent reprimand, "du könntest das später einem Menschen thun!" (III, 568). Then tenderly putting his arm around the boy he says: "Das ist dein Blut, mein Kind; wir müssen wissen, wogegen wir zu kämpfen haben!" (III, 568). This moving scene highlights the transformation Hinrich has undergone, but the ironic resemblance to a similar scene from his own youth also has gloomy implications, for it bears a reminder of the frightening power of heredity that manifests itself unmistakably in Rolf. Thus again Storm depicts human attempts to struggle against the forces of nature as futile, for although Hinrich through sorrowful discipline achieves a state of personal self-control, the irascibility which was among the root causes of his original problem lives on in future generations and cannot easily be eradicated.

In the light of all that happens in Book Two, it seems misleading to hint as Böttger does at a parallel between this part of the *Novelle* and the return of the hero in Homer's *Odyssey*<sup>76</sup>. While a similarity exists in the fact that both men conceal their identity by a disguise, Odysseus appearing as a beggar and Junker Hinrich as the "Wildmeister", and that eventually there is a recognition scene where their true status is revealed, the two works otherwise have little in common. Moreover the comparison obscures not only the issue of personal guilt and penance, but also the fact that Hinrich effectively renounces his claim to Grieshuus, that he is never reinstated, and his final homecoming takes place just in time for him to participate in the events which cause his own death and mark the extinction of his noble lineage.

It is deeply ironic that the deed which brings about the ultimate disaster is one of courage and self-sacrifice. Hinrich, despite his Christian characteristics in Book Two, acknowledges and fears the "schlimmen Tage" created by the superstitious disposition of the local people, but his love for Rolf and his desire to protect him are sufficiently strong to make him abandon any concern for his own safety. Having once forsaken his daughter, Hinrich's total commitment to his grandson is not only part of his atonement for his earlier neglect, but is a demonstration of his selfless desire to see Grieshuus flourish again under the lordship of its rightful heir. Such a commitment, however, is not without cost, and his last words before riding out on this fated night to save Rolf from danger reveal his conviction that this will be his final task on earth:

"Lebet wohl, Herr Pastor!" sprach er, "betet für mich, Ihr kennet ja das Wort der Schrift: Unstet und flüchtig sollst du sein auf Erden! - Noch dies; dann, hoffe ich, wird Ruhe sein." (III, 586)

But tragically his action, which might in some way have compensated for his former wrongs against his own flesh and blood, succeeds only in precipitating another death. His belief in the superstition proves true, but the outcome is worse than even he imagines, for he falls and dies before he can warn Rolf, and his riderless horse gallops on to do the opposite of what is intended. Rolf's attention is distracted at a crucial moment so that he receives a deadly wound, and thus the mission to save him goes disastrously awry.

The overriding impression at the end of the tale is therefore one of futility and supreme tragedy. For all Hinrich's painful attempts to expiate the crime of his youth, including his humble service in purging Grieshuus of its plague of wolves so that it will be safe and habitable for future generations, and culminating in the extreme sacrifice of his own life on behalf of his grandson, nothing of any value is accomplished. Instead of leading to wholeness and reparation, his long process of penance appears in the end to have been a pointless exercise, and his higher ideals and strivings prove powerless in the face of an inescapable fate that wipes out all that he has worked to achieve. Winfried Freund writes:

Bei aller Selbsterkenntnis, Selbstkontrolle und aufrichtiger Sühnehaltung bleibt Hinrich bis zu seinem Tode der Vertreter seines Geschlechts und der Ansprüche adliger Herrschaft, eines Geschlechts, über das die Geschichte längst den Untergang verhängt hat. 77

It is this idea of a fate that is hostile not simply to Hinrich as an individual, but to the prejudice and injustice of the class to which he belongs that complicates the issue of personal guilt. Attention is drawn to this notion of fate at the outset of the tale, where the framework narrator describes the still prevalent superstition of the "schlimmen Tage" as "der letzte Schatten eines düsteren Menschenschicksals, womit ein altes Geschlecht von der Erde verschwunden war" (III, 505). The repercussions of family guilt are worked out over decades before the end inevitably comes, and we witness here, as Walther Brecht has it, "die schleichende Tragik, die mit langen Zeiträumen operiert"<sup>78</sup>.

Partly since there is no immediate calamity resulting directly from Hinrich's crime and the lineage is preserved for some time, the question as to who bears the responsibility for the ultimate eradication of the family is a difficult one. Are the older members of the Junker ancestry to blame for their ruthless exclusiveness, or does the fault lie with Hinrich for the consequences of the violent murder of his brother? Ingrid Schuster combines the two possibilities by pointing out the Old Testament character of the forces at work against Hinrich's family, whereby the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children and the children's children. She asserts:

So wie Hinrich an der Schuld seiner Ahnen - die zur Ursache für seine eigene Schuld wird -, trägt auch Rolf an der Schuld Hinrichs mit. Das Geschlecht hat sein Recht auf Leben verwirkt.  
79

Paul Heyse on the other hand employs the vocabulary of Greek tragedy rather than that of the Judaeo-Christian tradition when he writes: "Übrigens wenn irgendwo der eherne Schritt der Nemesis und der Wahrspruch poetischer Gerechtigkeit erklingt, so ist's hier in Grieshuus"<sup>80</sup>. This interpretation, to which Storm apparently did not object, is again sufficiently vague to cover a number of differing emphases with regard to the issue of responsibility. Indeed it is the type of diagnosis which Storm probably preferred, given his disinclination to stress the idea of moral guilt, even when it was clearly discernible. This fact is demonstrated by his deliberate introduction of ambivalence into the tale in order to avoid a black-and-white verdict on Hinrich's actions. For example, in the powerful concluding scene where the Colonel addresses the local people gathered before the open coffins of Hinrich and Rolf, his

words express a deep respect, and seem to exonerate Hinrich from any taint of culpability:

So höret es! Nicht ich und nicht mein Sohn, den mir der Herr genommen - der Greis hier in dem zweiten Sarge . . . ist euer Herr gewesen bis an sein Ende. Aber ihr sahet ihn nicht, und da er kam als ein Dienender, habet ihr ihn nicht erkannt; unstet und flüchtig blieb er nach dem Fluch der Schrift ein langes Leben durch; denn seinen Zwillingsbruder hatte er im jähen Zorn erschlagen. Aber nicht wie Kain den Abel: der Bruder hatte ihm sein Glück, sein junges Weib, getödtet; und da zwang er ihn zum Kampf und erschlug ihn . . . Beim ewigen Gott! ich hätt' ihn auch erschlagen! (III, 593)

This scene, in which Pitrou identifies an interesting parallel with the closing lines of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that Storm had reread the same year<sup>81</sup>, confirms Hinrich's status not only as lord of Grieshuus, but as unquestioned tragic hero. "For he was likely, had he been put on, / To have prov'd most royal"<sup>82</sup> are the words of Fortinbras over the corpse of Hamlet, and equally the Colonel's tribute highlights the nobility of Hinrich's character and contains no hint of moral reproach.

A positive testimonial to Hinrich is also offered by the faithful servant-woman Matten who displays a striking loyalty to her true master throughout. Although blind in her old age, she is depicted ironically as the only one to see the real state of affairs, for she alone recognises the mysterious "Wildmeister" as Hinrich. Despite her gift of second sight, she is not portrayed as an uncanny figure, but rather in her simple, warm-hearted way she prays steadfastly for Hinrich in the words: "Und genade Gott auch dir, Junker Hinrich!" (III, 564) and she spurns the malicious gossip of the villagers who describe him as "ein Hund, der seinen Zwillingsbruder um das Erbe todtschlug und dann von seinem neugeborenen Kind davonlief" (III, 564). Matten's awareness of Hinrich's crime does not diminish her affection for him, and she alone realises the depth of his contrition and the dreadful weight of the burden he has to bear. "Er war der Beste", she says poignantly in recollection of his youthful potential, but the often-repeated saying with which she follows this: "aber - bei Gott ist Rath und That" (III, 564), reveals a need to believe that God is somehow in control and that some day there will be a divine answer for human suffering. For all her unanalytical mixture of religiosity and superstition, however, she comes closest of all the characters in the Novelle to true insight and forgiveness, and is depicted by Storm as a loving and understanding individual who

overlooks a fault and demonstrates a moral superiority over those who seek only to apportion blame.

A further means employed by Storm to draw attention away from the personal guilt of Hinrich is by emphasising in more general terms the violence and chaos in the land through setting the tale against a historical background of war. Both Book One with its so-called "Polackenkrieg" of 1655-60<sup>83</sup> and Book Two in which the crucial closing action takes place during the hostilities in the early 1700s, paint a vivid picture of the kind of savagery and conquest that was the constant reality of the times as the princes fought for the survival or the extension of their power. The military conflict resulting from the unrestrained absolutism of unscrupulous rulers is portrayed as plunging the common people into danger and suffering. "Überall im Lande hat es wüste ausgesehen" (III, 548) we read at the beginning of Book Two, and later the Colonel complains:

"Es ist hier nimmermehr zu hausen . . . die vormundschaftliche Regierung ist der Görtz, der steckt die Hälfte in die eigene Tasche und hat doch nie genug; und dabei kein Landtag und kein Landgericht!" (III, 569)

When Rolf however as an apparently innocent victim meets his death in an active battle situation, the question is raised whether Schuster is correct in saying that Storm uses the war as the instrument of "das Naturgesetz, das die Weltordnung aufrechterhält"<sup>84</sup> in order to punish and wipe out a lineage that has forfeited its right to live. She writes: "ein neuer Krieg fordert Rolfs und - indirekt - Hinrichs Leben. Damit sind die Weltordnung und die soziale Ordnung wiederhergestellt; der Jähzorn des Geschlechts kann sich nicht mehr weiter vererben"<sup>85</sup>. It must be remembered that Storm regarded all war as negative and destructive, and that he never promoted or glorified violence. He wrote in a letter of 1873: "Mir erscheint im Kriege, trotz alles Erhabenen, was dabei *gelegentlich* vorkommt, der Mensch, oder besser, die Menschheit in ihrer tiefsten Erniedrigung"<sup>86</sup>. In this light therefore the interpretation of the war at the end of the tale as a vehicle of retribution which restores order in the world runs contrary to Storm's thought. Rather than functioning as an avenging power that points to Hinrich's guilt and the guilt of his family, the war serves instead as an indiscriminate hostile force that adds to the poignancy of Hinrich's situation. It does not act in judgement against him, but



operates as the embodiment of an implacable fate that tragically frustrates his selfless attempt to save his lineage.

Moreover, given the chaos of the situation in which Rolf is enmeshed, it is not unreasonable to assume a high probability that he should be killed regardless of the supposedly "fated" date on which the skirmish takes place. Thus the reason for his death is ambiguous: it can be seen to result as much from the guilt of ruthless princes greedy for power as from the guilt of his grandfather that has created the "schlimmen Tage". Since Storm leaves both of these possibilities open, Böttger's categorical assertion that the tale ends "in romantischem Mystizismus"<sup>87</sup> is unsatisfactory. As is so often the case in Storm's work, the superstitious interpretation is presented for those who wish to adopt it, but the outward circumstances of the historical background supply a much more credible rationale for Rolf's downfall than old wives' tales about ominous places and dates that hark back to dark deeds from the past.

In summary therefore, the words spoken by the Colonel and by Matten modify our perception of Hinrich's guilt and stress his tragic status. But still more effective in this respect is the carefully depicted background of an era marked by violent power struggles on the part of the ruling class, for this serves to ennoble Hinrich by means of the stark contrast between his humble service, sacrificing both his rights and ultimately his life, and the destructive greed of others who seek only to conquer and usurp. Having said that, however, Hinrich's moral responsibility for his original offence remains a reality. Despite the family pressures of class distinction which motivated his crime in the first place, and the subsequent violence of the princes which make him appear almost saintly by comparison, care must be taken not to stress the element of social criticism in the tale to the extent that the central issue of guilt and penance is overlooked. Winfried Freund lays considerable emphasis on what he calls the "Aufforderungscharakter" of Book Two, claiming that Storm deliberately omitted the final framework in order to avoid a distancing effect and to present the reader with a challenge:

Die Trümmer von Grieshuus . . . mahnen den Menschen noch am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts angesichts des dreist sich entfaltenden preußischen Junkertums, endlich ernst zu machen mit einer wahrhaft demokratischen Gesellschaft im Geiste

herrschaftsfreier Mitmenschlichkeit. <sup>88</sup>

But while these matters were clearly close to Storm's heart and have an undeniable part to play in *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus*, it is perhaps significant that he did not highlight them in his comments on this work as he had done, for example, on *Aquis submersus*. Instead, as we have already seen, he pressed home the tragic nature of the tale, describing it as "erschütternd"<sup>89</sup> and declaring with conviction: "Das Ganze ist durchaus einheitlich: That und Buße!"<sup>90</sup>.

There is a strong impression then that it is not mistaken to see *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* as a tragedy of personal responsibility. Storm's use of the word "That" rather than "Buße" is symptomatic of his reluctance to be associated with a portrayal of tragedy that might be regarded as "viel zu eng und etwas philiströs"<sup>91</sup>, but his squeamishness in this respect was unnecessary, since in previous works he had already proved himself capable of a range of approaches to the motivation of tragic catastrophe in which personal guilt was seldom of primary importance. In 1881 he had written: "Der Untergang nur wegen eigener Schuld ist schon mehr eine pädagogische, polizeiliche oder criminelle Bestrafung"<sup>92</sup>, and this kind of narrowness was something that he always sought to avoid. By stressing in this chapter the personal responsibility of Hinrich, however, the intention is not to imply that the disaster in *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* is indeed precipitated "nur wegen eigener Schuld", for as we have seen, Hinrich is not the only guilty party. But allowing for all the mitigating factors and the evils of a rigid class system, this Novelle is nonetheless one in which Storm acknowledges the possibility of a blemished individual. Junker Hinrich, together with Franz Jebe in *Ein Bekenntnis*, is guilty of a grave moral offence, and neither of them seeks to exonerate himself by pleading a case of diminished responsibility or extenuating circumstances. Instead each of them embarks on a long and lonely process of penance that costs everything and achieves nothing.

Although Storm was far from embracing the full ethos of Christianity, one overwhelming conviction which *Ein Bekenntnis* and *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* have in common with Biblical teaching is that "no man can redeem the life of another, or give to God a ransom for him" (Psalm 49; 7). The Old Testament writer, of course, looks forward to the Messiah who alone can pay the price necessary for

full redemption and atonement, but Storm cherishes no such hope. A tragic sense of waste and futility is strong at the close of both Novellen, and the feeling predominates that a dreadful deed, once committed in the heat of the moment, can never be undone or truly atoned for. The words of Franz Jebe are: "mein war die Tat, und ich allein habe die Verantwortlichkeit dafür; soll eine Sühne sein, so muß ich sie selber finden" (IV, 237). The final implication, however, is that for all the self-discipline and sacrifice that his penance demands, he succeeds only in punishing himself, not in achieving genuine atonement with all the positive values of reparation, harmony and regained inner freedom that this implies. For Junker Hinrich it is the same, and the apparent peace identified by the Colonel in his face as he lies in his coffin may be accounted for more by his release from earthly pain than by the suggestion that he has accomplished what he set out to do.

*Ein Bekenntnis* and *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* therefore both tell the tragic tale of one who, having rashly committed an act of murder, spends the rest of his life striving painfully to be discharged from the devastating guilt which he perceives. Despite the destructiveness of Franz's and Hinrich's crimes, however, Storm shuns any approach that smacks of the law court or the pedant, and presents his characters, together with the circumstances in which they are set, in such a way that an unequivocal moral judgment is impossible. His concern instead is to portray the extremity of the individual who, having incurred guilt for whatever reason, finds himself alone and comfortless, and unable to invest any hope in a positive outcome from his repentance. The stories represent a step beyond the author's own theoretical pronouncements of 1881, according to which the most tragic of outcomes were motivated not by personal guilt but by the "Unzulänglichkeit des Ganzen", in other words the compulsion ensuing from hostile social and genetic factors with no individual moral implication. But for all that Storm exceeds his own theories, he also excels himself in these deeply poignant tales which by their ambivalent mixture of realism and mysticism, religiosity and paganism, guilt and innocence anticipate more than any of the other Novellen the tragic mastery of his final and greatest achievement *Der Schimmelreiter*.

### CONCLUSION

By virtue of their very number, a detailed examination of all the tragic Novellen from the later period of Storm's career would vastly exceed the scope of the present study. Each work is individual, and it can of course be an oversimplification to try to pinpoint "types", since many aspects recur and overlap. Nevertheless, in the preceding chapters we have sought, by considering six specific stories which treat themes representative of Storm's work, to identify and discuss the essential facets of his conception of tragedy. We have looked at the ideas of social compulsion, genetic compulsion and personal responsibility and seen how these factors, or a combination of them, typically motivate the tragic catastrophe in many of Storm's later works.

In the range of secondary material to which reference has been made it has been interesting to observe how the personal beliefs or ideologies of various critics have coloured their interpretation of Storm's work. The past one hundred or so years since the author's death in 1888 have had relatively little to offer in the way of untendentious scholarly investigation, passing instead through waves of exposition in which Storm's writing has at times been subjected to considerable manipulation. It is well known that Franz Stuckert, the first modern German critic to produce a major monograph on Storm which is still widely used by students today, together with commentators such as Karl Boll and Wolfgang Kayser, wrote under the influence of National Socialist doctrines, and were prone to stress the Nordic and "völkisch-national" elements in Storm's work. At the other extreme, Hartmut Vinçon and Peter Goldammer have remonstrated against the reception of Storm's works in the West, questioning the ideology which it represented, and doing Storm scholarship a service by drawing attention to the author's social awareness which previously had been largely ignored. While they helped significantly to dispel the image of Storm as a writer who was politically unaware and existed in a sentimental cocoon, their attempt to cast Storm in the role of the Marxist social critic has, however, been unpropitious. More recent trends in Storm reception have included the existentialist approach which prevailed in the 1960s, notably in the works of Tilo Alt, L.W. Wedberg, E.A. McCormick and T.J. Rogers, all of whom drew attention away from the socio-political

relevance of Storm's works and concentrated instead on the themes of loneliness, anxiety and silence, seeking to delve deeper into the hidden personality of the writer and the motivation of his characters. Rogers' attempt in particular to read a "solipsistic vision" into Storm is, however, somewhat exaggerated, and the result of these works in general has again been an unbalanced picture which alienates Storm from his nineteenth-century context. Perhaps even more controversial are the Freudian interpretations which appeared during the 1970s, for example by Gerhard Kaiser, Irmgard Roebeling and Hans-Sievert Hansen, who set out to analyse the psychological depths in Storm revealed through the *Novellen* and the *Märchen*. These applications of the ideas and techniques of psychoanalysis to Storm and his characters are certainly interesting, but appear at times to lend to rather far-fetched conclusions. The critical approaches outlined above are but a few examples of the wide-ranging nature of Storm reception over the years, some of which has been considerably detrimental to his work being fully valued and understood. It is my view that this topic would richly repay more detailed study, and is an investigation which has long been called for in Storm scholarship. A survey is needed to illuminate the baffling array of conflicting ideological standpoints from which the critics have argued, and to present an objective evaluation of each approach on the basis of its fidelity to the full canon of biographical and textual material available.

Any attempt to evaluate Storm's accomplishment as a tragic artist involves a deal of subjectivity, as well as depending on the kind of tragic writing with which his work is compared. To weigh his tales against the plays of the Ancient Greek or the Elizabethan stage reveals certain similarities in that at least some Aristotelian elements are common to all, but the nineteenth-century world in which he wrote had lost faith in the divine order of the universe and the nobility of human nature, with the result that there is little in his work of the supreme fortitude and inward triumph over despair associated with heroic tragedy. The age, as we have seen, was one of scepticism and of increasing agnosticism, and thus its approach to tragedy was radically different from what had gone before. Storm's aim was not to adhere punctiliously to Aristotle's theory of tragedy as the "imitation of noble actions", but rather to portray the lonely struggle of the common man with the consequences of class

prejudice, superstition, social stigma, his own genetic inheritance and at times even his personal guilt. He sought to convey the tragic defeat of the individual through the *inadequacy of the whole*, not to defend the order of the cosmos or with Milton to justify the ways of God to man.

But although Storm's world was one from which both the glory of God and the glory of man had departed, his work cannot be described merely as an expression of his despair at finding that a justification of the universe was no longer possible. His tragedies, it must be remembered, are those of Poetic Realism, not of Naturalism, and as such were not intended exclusively as a flagrant accusation against the world in which they occur. Instead their depiction of reality embraces the positive aspects of life as well as dealing openly with the question of pain. Our analysis of a number of Storm's Novellen has revealed his profound need for hope both in literature and in life generally, which resulted in a tendency to poeticise reality and temper the harshness of the tragic outcome by some expression of faith for the future of mankind. The writers of heroic tragedy had expressed their faith in man by portraying him rising superior in soul to the outward calamities which befall him, and Storm found a comparable escape from intolerable gloom by his technique of poeticisation. Of the Novellen that we have considered, *John Riew'* and *Ein Doppelgänger* stand out as particular examples where he avoids a sense of total wretchedness and devastation by setting the tale within a confident, even idyllic framework which, without cancelling the impact of the tragedy, nonetheless has a distancing effect and mutes the tone of what would otherwise be too shattering to bear.

Having said that, however, the purpose of this study has been to demonstrate that the overwhelming impression left by his later tragic work is indeed "erschütternd" rather than "rührend"<sup>1</sup>, and that he succeeded in his aim of leaving the reader "in einer herben Nachdenklichkeit über die Dinge des Lebens"<sup>2</sup>. Despite the remoteness of his writing from much of the formal theory of Aristotle, it can scarcely be denied that his tragedies arouse a feeling of profound pity at the spectacle of undeserved suffering and genuine fear as the precariousness of the human condition is revealed. We referred earlier to the succinctness of Thomas Mann's analysis when

he summed up *Der Schimmelreiter* as conveying the "Urgewalt der Verbindung von Menschentragik und wildem Naturgeheimnis"<sup>3</sup>. Although this description applies supremely to Storm's final masterpiece, it also captures the essence of his tragic work as a whole. The idea of "Menschentragik", while not excluding the possibility of guilt on a personal level, may be interpreted as the poignant incapacity of a community to live together in harmony, free from prejudice, harmful superstition or class distinction, and the "Naturgeheimnis" suggests the hidden power both of an inescapable genetic legacy and of the devastating outer forces of storm and sea. All of these elements feature in the later Novellen and are fundamental to Storm's conception of tragedy. The individual finds himself, in Storm's well-known words, "in fürchtlicher Einsamkeit; ein verllorener Punkt in dem unermessenen und unverstandenen Raum" (I, 395), with nothing to comfort or sustain him in his extremity.

It is in *Der Schimmelreiter* that one of the most thought-provoking comments in all of Storm's work is to be found, namely at the point where Elke and Hauke finally voice their suppressed hurts and questionings at their child's mental deficiency:

Die Frau sah finster vor sich hin. "Aber warum?" sprach sie; "was hab ich arme Mutter denn verschuldet?"

- "Ja, Elke, das hab ich freilich auch gefragt, den, der allein es wissen kann; aber du weißt ja auch, der Allmächtige gibt den Menschen keine Antwort - vielleicht, weil wir sie nicht begreifen würden" (IV, 348 f.)

This lament of Elke's is the fundamental tragic heart-cry which seeks expression so often in Storm's later work, and could equally have come from the mouth of any one of the lonely, ruined figures at the ends of his stories, struggling to come to terms with the fatal inadequacy in society, in their genetic inheritance, or in their own character that has destroyed them: "Aber warum? Was hab ich . . . armer John . . . armer Carsten . . . armer Hinrich . . . arme Phia . . . arme Renate denn verschuldet?" Hauke's reply to Elke underlines Storm's consciousness of man's desperate isolation in striving to comprehend the reason behind the inevitable guilt and tragedy in life. He gives no answer as to why the child is born feeble-minded, leaving man instead to contend with his fate before a silent God. For all the poeticisation in many of the stories, the ultimate feeling is one of dark and uncertain questioning: while the basic motivation of any of the tragedies is usually discernible, and individual faults where they occur are not difficult to label, on a deeper level Storm

does not offer any explanation as to why human existence should be pervaded by such a potential for tragedy. "Wir wollen es dem lieben Gott anheimstellen" (III, 51) is the religious platitude uttered by Carsten's sister in *Carsten Curator*, but the practice of attributing human suffering to an inscrutable divine purpose was simply an easy escape route for Storm in order to avoid offending his orthodox readership, and was far from representing his own interpretation of reality. While the attitude of his fictional characters is often Christian, his own was thoroughly atheistic and, as we have seen, he had to cope with his private pain without reference to God. Some of his most poignant words in this respect are found at the end of a letter to Heyse where he writes: "Lebten wir hundert Jahre früher, so würde ich vielleicht sagen: bete für mich! Jetzt sag ich nur: behalt' mich lieb!"<sup>4</sup>.

In the final analysis Storm's tragic work can perhaps best be described as the product of a reluctant child of his times. His tales may lack the grandeur of heroic tragedy, and his interest in the common man and in the themes of heredity and social discrimination may anticipate the tragedy of Naturalism, but despite his pessimistic streak, he remains true to the end to his conception of the poetic, and refuses to give way totally to an embittered and gloomy determinism. The place that he preserves for hope may sometimes seem small, but nonetheless it prevents his depiction of reality from sinking into unmitigated despair.



### NOTES

In an attempt to keep the notes as concise as possible, sources are referred to by the name of the author or editor and the year of publication. Full details of Storm's complete works, correspondence and all other items cited may be found in the bibliography.

#### CHAPTER ONE: Storm: The Influences on his Thought

1. Tilo Alt, 1973, p. 133
2. Draft of a letter from Storm to Miss Helen Clark, sent with a letter of 23.6.1869 to Theodor Fontane; *Storm-Fontane Briefwechsel*, p. 170
3. Eda Sagarra, 1971, p. 244
4. Cf. Karl Boll, 1940, p. 101; also Georg Lukács, 1911, p. 151
5. Herman Brause, 1967, p. 6
6. Storm - H. Brinkmann, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 169, 10.12.1852
7. W.A. Coupe, 1977, pp. 19 f.
8. Hartmut Vinçon, 1973, p. vi
9. D.S. Artiss, 1978, p. xii
10. Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke* IX, p. 252
11. One thinks, for example, of the following:  

Ich betone die sensitive Vergeistigung, den Extremismus seiner Gemütshaftigkeit so sehr und spreche sogar von leichter Krankhaftigkeit, um nichts auf ihn kommen zu lassen, was auf Bürgernormalität oder -sentimentalität, auf seelisches Philistertum hinausliefe, weil nämlich Fontane von Provinzialsimpelei gesprochen hat. Es ist nichts Rechtes damit, es stimmt nicht.  
 (*Gesammelte Werke* IX, p. 255)
12. Ibid., p. 248
13. F. Stuckert, 1955, pp. 332 f.
14. J.C. Storm - Esmarch, ed. F. Schnass, p. 11, Jan. 1844
15. Cf. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 33
16. Ferdinand Tönnies, 1917, pp. 5 f.
17. Ibid., p. 54
18. *Briefe an seine Frau*, p. 82, 21.7.1859
19. *Ein Sterbender* (1863), *Werke* (G) I, p. 932
20. *Am Kamin* (1861), *Werke* (G) I, p. 395

21. *Briefe* (G) II, p. 245, 4.8.1882
22. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 57, 1.3.1882
23. Storm - Keller, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 330, 7.8.1885
24. G. Storm, 1912/13, p. 210
25. August Viedert, *St. Petersburger Nachrichten*, 14.1.1856; cited by H. Vinçon, 1972, p. 174
26. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 50, 13.11.1881
27. "Briefwechsel zwischen Theodor Storm und Emil Kuh", p. 268, 24.2.1873
28. E. Schmidt, 1880, p. 37
29. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 29, 13.7.1876
30. Theodor Fontane, *Sämtliche Werke: Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen*, vol. 4, pp. 364, 371
31. Storm - Hermione von Preuschen, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 227, 21.9.1881
32. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 115
33. E. Schmidt, 1893, p. 454
34. Cf. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, pp. 12 f., 23.3.1870 and pp. 96 f., 20.3.1875
35. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 9
36. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Werke* II, p. 283
37. *Das Wesen des Christentums*, *Werke* VII, p. 5
38. Cited in *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, ed. H. Schmidt, 1969, p. 166
39. *Werke* III, p. 88
40. Cf. Maurice Mandelbaum, 1971, p. 22
41. The lecture was delivered at a meeting of the "Gesellschaft Deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte", and it was its later publication, together with another pamphlet on the topic, which provoked Vogt's response in *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* (1855).
42. From Justus Liebig's *Chemische Briefe* which he commenced publishing anonymously in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1852 and which were subsequently gathered and printed in book form. This particular comment taken from the work is cited by Jacob Moleschott in *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, p. 15.
43. *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, p. 25
44. *Ibid.*, p. 362

45. Ibid., p. 363
46. *Kraft und Stoff*, p. 160
47. Ibid., p. vi
48. L. Büchner, *Über religiöse und wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung. Ein historisch-kritischer Versuch*, 1887, p. 65. Cf. also *Aus Natur und Wissenschaft II*, 1884, p. 252
49. L. Feuerbach, *Werke X*, p. 3
50. Unpublished part of a letter, cited in G. Himmelfarb, 1967, p. 383. The "friend" was the geologist Charles Lyell, who pursued the same policy.
51. There were many religious attacks on Darwin's theory. The following comment, for example, was published in the *Methodist Recorder* of 31.8.1866:  
 We regard this theory, which seeks to eliminate from the universe the immediate, ever-present, all-pervasive action of a living and personal God, which excludes the possibility of the supernatural and the miraculous . . . as practically destructive of the authority of divine revelation, and subversive of the foundation of both religion and morality.
52. Storm - Ernst, *Briefe (G) II*, p. 19, 3.8.1870
53. Among the concluding remarks in Darwin's *Origin of Species* we read (p. 489):  
 As natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection.
54. Letter of 1860 from Darwin to Asa Gray; F. Darwin (ed.), 1887, vol. 2, p. 312
55. Diary entry of 14.8.1883, *Werke (LL)*, p. 529
56. *Storm-Mommsen Briefwechsel*, p. 126, 12.10.1884
57. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, p. 130
58. Storm - Ernst, *Briefe (G) II*, p. 19
59. Ibid.
60. Storm - Oskar Horn, *Briefe (G) II*, p. 74, 31.10.1873
61. Ingrid Krauss, 1931, p. 9
62. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel I*, p. 88, 20.3.1875
63. "Briefwechsel zwischen Theodor Storm und Emil Kuh", p. 105, 12.7.1872
64. Kuh - Storm, Ibid., p. 543, 5.1.1875
65. This is attested, for example, by the report of Storm's friend Ferdinand Tönnies, who had discovered in the course of a

conversation with him that Storm had never heard of the Kantian conception of time and space. (F. Tönnies, 1917, p. 59). Tönnies also wrote (p. 61):

Storm dachte überwiegend in Anschauungen, das begriffliche Denken lag ihm ferner, aber er ließ sich gern davon erzählen und fand auch in philosophischen Verallgemeinerungen die Erhabenheit, die über das Leid der Stunde und des Tages hinaushebt.

66. *Parerga und Paralipomena*, *Sämtliche Werke* IV, p. 504

67. Storm - E. Kuh, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 68, 13.8.1873

68. Ibid.

69. Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke* I, *Buddenbrooks*, p. 722

70. Cf. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 31

71. Storm - Ada Christen, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 60, 2.3.1873

72. Storm - E. Kuh, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 60, 2.3.1873

73. From Storm's diary as a student, *Werke* (G) IV, p. 532

74. Storm - Hans, *Briefe an seine Kinder*, p. 45, 17.1.1868

75. Storm - Constanze, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 67, 5.8.1845

76. *Briefe an seine Braut*, p. 254, 13.6.1846

77. Ibid., p. 187, 31.1.1846

78. For example:

Das ist das Größte, was dem Menschen gegeben ist, daß es in seiner Macht steht, grenzlos zu lieben.

(*Briefe an seine Braut*, pp. 262 f., 20.6.1846); or:

Ich fühle in unserer Liebe mein ganzes Glück, nicht für hier bloß, sondern für alle Zeit, wo ich noch sein werde; es ist mein Heiligstes, mein Alles, womit ich vor Gott treten will.

(Ibid., p. 240, 12.5.1846). See also *Briefe an seine Braut*, pp. 5, 15, 40, 52, 68, 103 f., 175, 177, 181, 202 f., 211, 236 f., 263, 265, 277, 285; and *Briefe an seine Frau*, pp. 72, 86, 175, 177.

79. *Briefe* (G) II, p. 68, 13.8.1873

80. *Briefe an seine Braut*, p. 307, 19.8.1846

81. *Briefe* (G) I, p. 485, April 1866

82. Storm - Hans, 1.12.1871; cited by W. Tschorn, 1978, p. 72

83. *Briefe* (G) I, pp. 481 f., 21.4.1866

84. Ibid.

85. Storm - Albert Nieß, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 220, 8.6.1881

86. Thomas Mann, "Theodor Storm, Der Mensch", 1964, p. 50

87. *Briefe an seine Braut*, p. 161 f., 22.12.1845
88. *Storm-Mörke Briefwechsel*, p. 31, 12.7.1853
89. He expressed his view strongly when he wrote:  
     in Husum sein und das Treiben der Fremden, die  
     Niedertracht der Heimischen ansehen, ohne alle meine Kräfte  
     dagegen anwenden zu können - das vermöchte ich freilich  
     nicht - ich würde dort bald körperlich oder gemütlich  
     zugrunde gehen.  
     (Storm - J.C. Storm, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 261, 15.3.1855)
90. Storm - J.C. Storm, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 397, 10.5.1862
91. Storm - Brinkman, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 440, 18.1.1864
92. *Briefe in die Heimat*, p. 172, 12.12.1861
93. Storm - Pietsch, *Blätter der Freundschaft*, p. 176, 16.8.1867
94. *Briefe* (G) I, pp. 522 f., letter dated end of May, 1868
95. Cf. J.W. Smeed, 1960, p. 126
96. Storm - Lucie Storm, *Briefe* (G), pp. 392 f., March 1862
97. O. Pflanze, 1963, pp. 203 f.
98. Ibid., pp. 277 f.
99. Storm - Pietsch, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 477, 10.12.1865
100. *Briefe* (G) II, p. 8, 5.1.1870
101. *Blätter der Freundschaft*, ed. Pauls, p. 82, letter dated 1862
102. Storm - E. Kuh, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 67, 13.8.1873
103. Storm - H. Brinkman, *Briefe an seine Freunde*, p. 54; enclosure  
     with a letter of 10.12.1852, entitled: "Zu einer Kritik meiner  
     Gedichte".
104. F. Stuckert, 1941, p. 192
105. *Briefe an seine Braut*, p. 310, 29.8.1846
106. *Briefe an seine Frau*, p. 61, 20.7.1858
107. MS of *Veronika*, cf. R. Pitrou, *Le travail de "polissage" dans les  
     nouvelles de Theodor Storm*, Caen 1920, pp. 78 f. The shortened  
     version is found in *Werke* (G) I, p. 668.
108. Cf. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 273
109. Storm - Lucie Storm, *Briefe* (G) I, pp. 392 f., March 1862
110. *Briefe* (G) I, pp. 467 f., 3.6.1865
111. *Briefe an seine Kinder*, p. 49, 2.2.1868

112. A. Köster, *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1903, p. 58
113. G. Storm, 1924, pp. 8 f.
114. Geert Selig, 1924, p. 370
115. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 49, 2.5.1883
116. E. Esmarch, 1902/03, p. 63
117. Cf. Otto Frommel, 1902, pp. 101 f.
118. Some interesting details concerning Storm's legal studies and subsequent work as a magistrate are recorded by Otto v. Fisenne in his article: "Theodor Storm als Jurist", 1959.
119. The harmony of the two careers is expressed in a letter of 21.8.1873 to Emil Kuh (*Briefe* (G) II, pp. 69 f.):  
 Mein richterlicher und poetischer Beruf sind meistens in gutem Einvernehmen gewesen, ja ich habe es sogar oft als Erfrischung empfunden, aus der Welt der Phantasie in die praktische des reinen Verstandes einzukehren und umgekehrt.  
 or again ten years later to Heinrich Seidel on 22.8.1883 (*Briefe* (G) II, p. 281):  
 ich weiß aus Erfahrung, wie sehr poetische Produktion durch ganz davon ge- und verschiedene Arbeit getragen und gefördert wird.  
 The more negative aspect, however, is also mentioned often, for example to his parents in a letter of 24.1.1858 (*Briefe in die Heimat*, p. 102):  
 Ich fühle jetzt recht, welchen Abscheu ich vor meinen amtlichen Geschäften habe; wenn ich nur daran denke, schrecke ich innerlich zusammen. Nicht wegzuleugnen ist, daß diese mir fremdartige Beschäftigung doch mein ganzes Leben verdirbt. Es ist zwar nur ein Tropfenschauer, diese täglich ins Haus fallenden Akten, aber wenn die Tropfen immer und immer auf eine Stelle fallen, so wird es doch bekanntlich zuletzt eine Tortur, die Kräfte und Besinnung raubt.
120. *Briefe an seine Kinder*, pp. 6 f., 6.8.1865
121. Storm - J.C. Storm, ed. Loets, p. 214, 27.10.1860
122. *Briefe in die Heimat*, p. 178, 18.2.1862
123. *Briefe an seine Frau*, pp. 166 f.
124. Storm - Pietsch, *Blätter der Freundschaft*, p. 74, 22.2.1862
125. Storm - J.C. Storm, ed. Loets, p. 227, 1.7.1862
126. Storm - Pietsch, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 457, 30.4.1864
127. Storm - Pietsch, *Briefe* (G) I, pp. 459 f., 12.7.1864
128. *Briefe* (G) II, pp. 280 f., 22.8.1883

## CHAPTER TWO: The Conceptual Basis

1. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 43 f.; supplement to a letter of 6.7.1881
2. E.K. Bennett, 1934, Chapter VIII
3. Cf., for example, Benno von Wiese, *Novelle*, 1963; K.K. Polheim, *Novellentheorie und Novellenforschung*, 1965; Roger Paulin, *The Brief Compass: The Nineteenth-Century Novelle*, 1985.
4. J. Klein, 1954, p. 29
5. Cited by F. Martini, 1962, p. 116
6. Cf. J.E. Springarn, 1908, p. 136 ff.
7. The background to this period is helpfully outlined by J.M. Ritchie in his chapter entitled "Realism" in *Periods in German Literature*, 1966, pp. 171-195. Of the post-1848 situation he writes:  

In the age of Bismarck the *Bürger* showed little concern for great works of art. He had withdrawn from the world of ideals into the manageable world of business, science and technology in which he quickly showed his worth and changed the face of Germany as he had failed to do politically. Charlatan poets and artists satisfied his immediate needs for the "poetic". (p. 177)
8. F. Martini, 1962, p. 117
9. Robert Prutz, *Neue Schriften*, 1854, pp. 205 f.
10. Franz von Gaudy, *Sämtliche Werke* XII, p. 147, 1844
11. The Prussian legal code, the "Allgemeines Landrecht", made it clear that intellectual freedom was severely limited:  

§151 Wer durch frechen unehrerbietigen Tadel, oder Verspottung der Landesgesetze und Anordnungen im Staate Mißvergnügen und Unzufriedenheit der Bürger gegen die Bürger veranlaßt, der hat Gefängnis oder Festungsstrafe auf sechs Monate bis zwey Jahre verwirkt.

(*Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten*, Neue Aufl. Unveränderter Abdruck der Auflage von 1821, p. 509, cited by Hugh Ridley in: "Intellectual freedom in Germany's 1848 Revolution: the trial of Gustav Adolph Schlöffer", 1978, p. 310)
12. Theodor Mundt, *Moderne Lebenswirren. Briefe und Zeitabenteuer eines Salzschreibers*, 1834, pp. 156 f.
13. Consider, for example, the remarks of August Wilhelm Schlegel:  

Möglich mag es vielleicht seyn, alle Novellen zu dramatisieren, und dieß könnte vielleicht, bey der Notwendigkeit im Dramatischen gründlicher und detaillirter zu motiviren, eine Probe der Richtigkeit abgeben . . . So viel ist gewiß: die Novelle bedarf entscheidender Wendepunkte, so daß die Hauptmassen der Geschichte deutlich in die Augen fallen, und dieß Bedürfnis hat auch das Drama.

(*Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur und Kunst. III Teil (1803 bis*

1804): *Geschichte der romantischen Literatur*, 1884)

14. Heinrich Laube, *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, 6.6.1833, p. 430
15. Preface to volume XI of *Ludwig Tiecks Schriften*, 1829, p. LXXXVIII
16. Ibid., pp. LXXXIX f.
17. Introduction to *Deutscher Novellenschatz*, ed. P. Heyse & H. Kurz, 1871; cited by K.K. Polheim, 1970, p. 144
18. Ibid., pp. 145 f.
19. E.K. Bennett, 1934, p. 193
20. The widely-read *Poetics* of Julius Caesar Scaliger, published in 1561, declared Aristotle to be the perpetual dictator of all the arts: "Aristoteles imperator noster, omnium bonarum artium dictator perpetuus", (*Poetics Libri Septem*, II, p. 1), and it was from around this time onwards that the tenets of heroic Greek tragedy, as described by Aristotle, were most avidly emulated.
21. Cf. D.W. Lucas, 1968, appendices II & IV
22. G.E. Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* LXXV, p. 324
23. From Lessing's introduction to the translation of Thomson's tragedies: *Gesammelte Werke* III, p. 701
24. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 131, 30.7.1883
25. It must not be forgotten, however, that it was Storm's aim for his work to be not merely "rührend", but "erschütternd" (*Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 118, 13.7.1876), and this implies an emotion which is stronger than pity or sympathy alone.
26. E.K. Bennett, 1934, p. 200 (The emphasis is mine)
27. J.M. Ritchie, "Drama and Melodrama in the Nineteenth Century Novelle", 1962, p. 86
28. Bernard Bruch, "Novelle und Tragödie. Zwei Kunstformen und Weltanschauungen", 1928
29. Ibid., p. 292
30. Ibid., p. 330
31. Fontane uses this word. Cf., for example, Fontane - Friedrich Stephany, *Briefe 1880-1898* (ed. Pniower & Schlenther), p. 219, 10.10.1889:  

Er [der Realismus] wird erst ganz echt sein, wenn er sich umgekehrt mit der Schönheit vermählt und das nebenherlaufende Häßliche, das nun mal zum Leben gehört, verklärt hat.

This subject is examined in detail by Hugo Aust in: *Theodor Fontane: "Verklärung". Eine Untersuchung zum Ideengehalt seiner Werke*, Bonn 1974.



32. Fontane - Emil Dominik, *Briefe 1880-1898*, ed. Pniower & Schlenther, p. 67, 13.2.1882
33. Fontane - Emilie Fontane, *Briefe I*, ed. Schreinert, p. 200, 14.6.1883
34. Turgenev - L. Pietsch, *Storm-Turgenev Briefwechsel*, p. 119, 28.12.1876
35. Fontane - Emilie Fontane, *Briefe I*, ed. Schreinert, pp. 164 f., 9.7.1881
36. B. Bruch, 1928, p. 329
37. Hermann Pongs, "Möglichkeiten des Tragischen in der Novelle", *Jahrbuch der Kleistgesellschaft*, 1931-32, pp. 38-104
38. B. Bruch, 1928, p. 303
39. H. Pongs, 1932, p. 55
40. Ibid., p. 76
41. Ibid., p. 42
42. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 89, 12.8.1881
43. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel II*, pp. 43 f.; supplement to a letter of 6.7.1881. Cf. also p. 171, note 6.
44. Ibid.
45. G. Storm, 1912/13, p. 204
46. Thomas Mann, "Theodor Storm, der Mensch", 1964, p. 48
47. Cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 177; Sophocles, *Antigone*, 1272
48. Schiller, *Werke XI*, p. 246
49. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel II*, p. 50, Sept. 1881.
50. Storm - Johannes Wedde, *Briefe II*, p. 390, 15.5.1888. One may speculate whether Storm derived this notion from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. In Book 5, Ch. 7, there is a discussion of the differences between the novel and the drama which includes a statement strikingly similar to Storm's:  
 „Der Romanheld muß leidend, wenigstens nicht im hohen Grade wirkend sein; von dem dramatischen verlangt man Wirkung und Tat. (*Sämtliche Werke V*, p. 306)
51. Paul Heyse, in his introduction to the *Deutscher Novellenschatz*, draws out this difference between narrative and dramatic technique when he describes Keller's style as conveying:  
 die echte behagliche Gelassenheit und Gelindigkeit des erzählenden Vortrags, die in ruhig hingleitendem Strome den Hörer an wechselnden Bildern vorüberführt, ohne ihn in jähe dramatische Strudel und atembeklemmende Kaskaden hineinzureißen.  
 (Cited by A. Zäch, 1952, p. 48)

52. Cited by Alfred Biese, "Das Problem des Tragischen", 1896, p. 104
53. Storm - Eduard Alberti, *Briefe* II, p. 244, 12.3.1882
54. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 50, Sept. 1881
55. Cf. Section C of this chapter for a fuller discussion of the similarities between the work of Storm and the Naturalist writers.
56. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 49, Sept. 1881
57. Diary entry of 1.10.1881, *Werke* (LL), p. 511
58. Cf. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 81, 6.6.1884
59. The passage quoted is preceded by the sentence:  
H. Heiberg sagte mir, ein ihm bekannter Prediger habe geäußert, er habe vor, über mich zu schreiben und dabei nachzuweisen, daß die Personen meiner Novellistik ohne eigne Schuld zu Grunde gingen.
60. Alfred Biese, 1896, pp. 105, 104
61. Storm - H. Schleiden, 9.11.1881, quoted in *Werke* (LL), p. 777
62. Storm - E. Alberti, *Briefe* (G)II, p. 244, 12.3.1882
63. Tilo Alt, "Escape and Transformation: An Enquiry into the Nature of Storm's Realism", 1978, p. 121
64. Storm - H. Brinkmann, *Briefe* (G)I, p. 147, 10.7.1851
65. Storm - Christine Hebbel, *Briefe* (G)II, p. 315, 4.2.1885
66. Hebbel, *Tagebücher* II, p. 409, entry 3158, 13.6.1844
67. *Ibid.*, p. 66, entry 2129, 13.9.1840
68. Storm - Klaus Groth, *Briefe* II, p. 256 f., 14.8.1882
69. J.M. Ritchie, 1966, p. 184
70. A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, Sämtliche Werke* I, p. 353
71. *Ibid.*, p. 355
72. *Ibid.*, p. 354
73. Diary entry of 1.10.1881, *Werke* (LL), p. 511
74. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 49, Sept. 1881
75. *Storm-Mommsen Briefwechsel*, p. 126, 12.10.1884
76. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 116, 27.11.1882
77. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* I, p. 62, 27.9.1887

78. By this I mean, for example, the way in which the hero Carsten holds to the belief that God does all things well, despite the seeming injustice of the fate which shatters him.
79. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, p. 76, 15.6.1881. *Carsten Curator* is examined in detail by John R. Hillier in his dissertation entitled: "Theodor Storm's Novelle *Carsten Curator*: an evaluation of the terms 'Befreiungsdichtung' and 'das Peinliche'", Leicester 1973
80. Storm - *Hermione von Prueschen*, ed. Ranft, p. 79, 26.5.1878
81. Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke* XII, p. 280
82. F. Stuckert, 1937, p. 540
83. Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke* XII, p. 320
84. Hans Habe, "Gruß an einen sehr großen Deutschen"
85. F. Stuckert, 1955, pp. 400 f.
86. E. Krey, 1914, p. 58
87. David Brett-Evans, "Die späteren Novellen Theodor Storms als Vorboten des Naturalismus", 1976
88. Paul Besson, "Un poète de la vie intime. Les romans et nouvelles de Théodore Storm", 1906, pp. 305 f.
99. Alfred Biese, 1888, p. 31
90. Ibid., p. 32
91. Ibid.
92. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 56, 1.3.1882
93. He seems, though, to have come to recognise Zola's talent and prestige in the end, describing him as "einen Mann, der zufällig auch ein recht großer Poet und bei dem das mitunter durchschlägt". Cited by Köster, *Werke* I, p. 63, diary entry of 9.3.1888
94. This is probably because they assumed that Storm would be opposed to Naturalism. Fontane's personal feeling is reflected in a comment he made regarding Emile Zola:  
     gewöhnliche Schriftsteller, und gerade die guten und besten, kommen einem arm daneben vor. Storm die reine Kirchenmaus.  
     Fontane - Emilie Fontane, *Briefe* I, ed. Schreinert, p. 211, 25.6.1883
95. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 135, 18.5.1886
96. Ibid., pp. 152 f., 2.6.1887
97. Ibid., I, p. 31, 18.3.1870
98. Quoted by Köster, *Werke* I, p. 63; diary entry of 9.3.1888

99. Adolf Stern, 1905, p. 110
100. D. Brett-Evans, 1976, p. 311
101. Köster, *Werke I*, p. 63; diary entry of 9.3.1888
102. *Storm-Mommsen Briefwechsel*, p. 126, 12.10.1884
103. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 168, 12.12.1885
104. Recent scholarship has generated some debate on the nature and extent of Tönnies' influence upon Storm. Cf. H. Segeberg, "Ferdinand Tönnies' Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft und Theodor Storms Erzählwerk. Zur literarischen Spiegelung eines Epochenumbruchs", 1985; R. Bartoleit, "Das Verhältnis von Ferdinand Tönnies' Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft zu Theodor Storms Erzählwerk. Über die Fragwürdigkeit einer naheliegenden Interpretation", 1987; H. Segeberg, "Noch einmal: Storm - Tönnies. Eine Duplik", 1989
105. Michael Georg Conrad, 1902, p. 65
106. Heinrich Hart, *Gesammelte Werke III*, p. 274
107. Ibid.
108. *Hermann Conradis Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 365
109. Gustav Faber, "Carl Bleibtreu als Literaturkritiker", 1936, p. 52
110. D. Brett-Evans, 1976, p. 316

CHAPTER THREE: The Tragedy of Social Compulsion  
(Renate, Ein Doppelgänger)

1. *Briefe in die Heimat*, p. 184, 10.5.1862
2. *Storm-Fontane Briefwechsel*, p. 136, 2.11.1878
3. D.S. Artiss, 1978, pp. 135-146
4. Ibid., p. 136
5. Ibid.
6. *Briefe an seine Frau*, p. 53, 11.7.1858
7. J.U. Terpstra, 1974, p. 47
8. Alfred Rammelmeyer, 1977, p. 250
9. Cf. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel I*, p. 70, 8.12.1877
10. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, pp. 168 f., 14.12.1885
11. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 35
12. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 307

13. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 42, 13.8.1878
14. On the subject of the European witch-craze cf. H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, 1967, pp. 90-192.  
Both Luther and Calvin gave full credence to witches and the all-pervading power of the devil, and based their preaching on the Mosaic Law which stated: "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus xxii, 18), as well as on many New Testament warnings of the cunning of the devil. Cf. H.C. Lea, *Materials toward a History of Witchcraft*, 1957, pp. 417 ff., and Nikolaus Paulus, *Hexenwahn und Hexenprozeß, vornehmlich im 16ten Jahrhundert*, 1910, Section II: "Luthers Stellung zur Hexenfrage" and Section IV: "Die Bibel als Autorität für protestantische Hexenverfolgung".
15. Storm - Hartmuth Brinkman, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 440, 18.1.1864
16. *Briefe in die Heimat*, p. 172, 12.12.1861
17. For a most interesting and informative profile of Goldschmidt see the article by J.U. Terpstra, "Petrus Goldschmidt aus Husum. Ein nordfriesischer Gegner Balthasar Bekkers und Thomasius", 1965, pp. 363-383
18. First published in Amsterdam in 1691, and translated into German in 1693. Bekker was regarded as the most dangerous enemy of witch-beliefs, and as a result of his work he was denounced by the Calvinist clergy of Holland and eventually driven out of the ministry.
19. The full title runs to a length of 77 words, in the course of which the reader is informed that the work is directed "Wider die vorige und heutige Atheisten, Naturalisten und namentlich D. Beckern in der Bezauberten Welt etc. Aus allen aber der Teuffels List, Tücke, Gewalt, heimliche Nachstellungen und Betrug handgreiflich kan ersehen und erkandt werden. . ."
20. Storm wrote to Erich Schmidt on 9.3.1878 (*Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* I, pp. 86 f.):  
Herr Petrus Goldschmidt war ein Husumer, und was ich von seinem Lebenslauf erzählt habe, ist historisch. Seinen "höllischen Morpheus" besitze ich selbst; aus diesem trefflichen Buche stieg eines Abends die Gestalt des Verfassers so lebendig vor mir auf, daß die betreffende Scene gleich in mir fertig wurde.  
It is interesting that Goethe also made use of this work while preparing his "Walpurgisnacht" scene. Records show that he borrowed it from the Weimar Library on 23 February 1801. (Cf. Goerg Witkowski, *Die Walpurgisnacht im ersten Teile von Goethes Faust*, 1894, pp. 30 ff.)
21. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 346
22. D.S. Artiss, 1978, pp. 137 f.
23. Cf. *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, ed. H. Bächtold-Stäubli, VIII, 558
24. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 42, 13.8.1878

25. Ibid., pp. 47 f., 29.8.1878
26. When Storm sent the manuscript to the publishers on 26.2.1878, he wrote (*Werke* (G) III, p. 703):  
     Anbei denn die Novelle; leider kann ich keinen treffenden Titel finden; 'Eine Hexe' wäre schon in gewissem Sinne richtig; aber er präokkupierte zuviel; bloße Namentitel, wie 'Renate' sind nun gar fatal.  
     Storm turned to Erich Schmidt for advice, but various suggestions from both of them, including 'Anno 1700', 'Aus vergilbten Blättern', 'Am Moore', 'Der Hof' and even 'Schwarze Kunst' all were unsatisfactory, and in the end Storm wrote: "so wird nichts übrig bleiben als der Nothtitel 'Renate'". (*Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* I, p. 87, 9.3.1878)
27. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 345
28. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 310
29. Ibid.
30. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 42, 13.8.1878
31. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 345
32. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 310
33. H. Naue, 1941, p. 83
34. Letter to the publishers of 26.3.1878, *Werke* (G) III, p. 703
35. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 49, Sept. 1881
36. Cf. note 26
37. D.S. Artiss, 1978, p. 142
38. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 344
39. Ibid., p. 346
40. Ibid., p. 344
41. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 35
42. Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) was a professor at the University of Halle who criticized prevailing witch-beliefs and the system of judicial torture. His work *De Crimine Magiae* appeared in 1703 and was translated into German under the title *Lehrsätze von dem Laster der Zauberei*.
43. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 308
44. "Der Schicksalsgedanke in den Novellen Theodor Storms", Diss., Innsbruck, 1958, p. 110
45. Muchitsch quotes from Stifter's *Brigitta* in *Erzählungen in der Urauffassung*, ed. M. Stefl, Augsburg 1952, p. 226
46. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 36

47. The poem was composed in 1865, but not published until 1871 as part of *Der Amtschirurgus - Heimkehr*.
48. Stuckert, 1955, p. 220; see also pp. 152 f.
49. A. Biese, 1917, p. 90
50. R. Pitrou, Paris 1920, p. 401
51. F.R. Sammern-Frankenegg, 1969, p. 40
52. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 194
53. G. Storm, 1924, pp. 8 f.
54. Storm - Dorothea Jensen, ed. G. Ranft, p. 52, 25.3.1866
55. Joseph Hansen, *Zauberwahn, Inquisition und Hexenprozeß im Mittelalter und die Entstehung der großen Hexenverfolgung*, 1900, p. 538
56. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 140, 29.8.1886
57. T.J. Rogers, 1970, p. 95
58. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 346
59. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 130, 16.9.1886
60. Ibid.
61. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 140, 29.8.1886
62. Schmidt - Storm, 13.9.1887, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 1009
63. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 390
64. K.E. Franzos, "Zur Erinnerung an Theodor Storm", 1888, p. 93
65. Eckart Pastor, 1988, p. 163
66. Johannes Wedde, 1888, p. 27
67. Ibid.
68. H. Vinçon, 1973, p. 150
69. Storm - J. Wedde, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 389, 15.5.1888
70. Cf. Vinçon, 1973, p. 152. The fund had to be terminated later due to devaluation.
71. Storm - Rudolf Hermann Schnee, 6.10.1856, cited by G. Bollenbeck, 1988, p. 150
72. R. Pitrou, Paris 1920, p. 696
73. A. Biese, 1887, p. 228

74. E. Pastor, 1988, p. 162
75. Ibid., p. 167
76. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 168
77. E. Pastor, 1988, p. 163
78. F. Martini, 1962, p. 661
79. Heinz-Peter Niewerth, 1981, p. 316
80. Manfred Schunicht, 1985, p. 183
81. A. Biese, 1887, p. 228
82. Brian Coghlan, 1971, p. 17
83. G. Bollenbeck, 1988, p. 330
84. F. Tönnies, 1917, p. 61
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid., p. 70
87. H.P. Niewerth, 1981, p. 317
88. Gerhard Kaiser, 1979, p. 414
89. E. Pastor, 1988, p. 181
90. W. Tschorn, 1978, p. 166
91. A. Biese, 1887, p. 228
92. *Briefe an seine Frau*, pp. 166 f.
93. Karl Emil Franzos, "Schriften über Theodor Storm", 1888, p. 277
94. Cf. *Handwörterbuch des Deutschen Aberglaubens*, ed. H. Bächtold-Stäubli, I, 19
95. E. Muchitsch, 1958, p. 89
96. I. Welp, 1952, p. 37
97. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 394
98. H. Naue, 1941, p. 77. He quotes Hermann Pongs, "Möglichkeiten des Tragischen in der Novelle", 1931/32, p. 92
99. H. Naue, 1941, p. 107
100. G. Grimm, 1980, p. 337
101. F. Böttger, 1958, pp. 345 f.
102. G. Grimm, 1980, p. 337



103. Frank X. Braun, 1957, p. 269
104. Cf. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 168; also "Storms 'Ein Doppelgänger' und Brechts 'Der gute Mensch von Sezuan'", 1974, p. 35
105. Bruno Loets, 1951, p. 451
106. T. Fontane, "Sophokles: König Oedipus", *Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen*, vol. 2, *Theaterkritiken*, pp. 144 f.
107. G. Grimm, 1980, p. 337
108. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 393
109. Storm - Hermione von Preuschen, ed. G. Ranft, p. 79, 26.5.1878
110. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 347
111. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 170
112. M. Schunicht, 1985, p. 181
113. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 347
114. G. Storm, 1912/13, p. 162
115. *Briefe in die Heimat*, p. 184, 10.5.1862

CHAPTER FOUR: The Tragedy of Genetic Compulsion  
(John Riew', *Der Herr Etatsrat*)

1. Gregor Mendel (1822-84), an Austrian monk and botanist, was the founder of genetics as an independent science. He developed his theory of inheritance from a series of experiments on the hybridization of garden peas. His findings, which were published in 1866 in the *Verhandlungen des Naturforschenden Vereins in Brünn*, had already been announced a year previously in two papers read at meetings of the society on 8.2.1865 and 8.3.1865.
2. *Storm-Mommsen Briefwechsel*, p. 126, 12.10.1884
3. Cf. *Werke* (G) III, pp. 678 f. Here John relates how he read an article in the *Hamburger Korrespondent* which discussed the problem of heredity.
4. Cited by M. Altmann, 1980, p. 91
5. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, p. 52, 22.10.1879
6. Cf. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 466, note 45a; also Storm - Hedwig von Byern, 17.3.1886, ed. Brenke, p. 586
7. Cf. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* I, p. 67, 8.12.1873, and p. 145, note 39, 4; also Storm - Lisbeth, März 1870, *Briefe an die Kinder*, p. 189
8. Cf. G. Storm, 1912/13, p. 70; also Storm - Pietsch, 6.6.1858, ed. Pauls, pp. 45, 255

9. Cf. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 127, 15.1.1886; also Storm - Pietsch, 31.8.1887, ed. Pauls, p. 248
10. Cited by Stuckert, 1955, pp. 103 f., 15.4.1885
11. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, p. 73, 15.3.1881
12. Ibid., p. 52, 22.10.1879
13. Ibid., p. 44, 2.5.1879
14. Storm - Hans, 22.12.1879, *Werke* (LL) II, p. 950
15. Gerhard Kaiser, 1979, p. 424
16. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, p. 52, 22.10.1879
17. Ibid., p. 26, 2.4.1877
18. Even *Carsten Curator*, while affording some insight into the crisis which Storm was facing in his own family at the time, was not intended to be autobiographical. Cf. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, p. 76, 15.6.1881. Storm here asks Heyse not to take literally the parallels between his son and Heinrich:  

Ich möchte es Dir aber ausdrücklich sagen, daß Hans in so unehrenhafte Dinge, wie der Sohn des C.C., nie hineingerathen ist.
19. Ibid., p. 76, 15.6.1881. Similarly, to Schmidt he describes the work as a "Befreiung (à la Göthe)": *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, p. 185, note 11, 25.6.1877.
20. Jan. 1875, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 693
21. Thomas Mann, *Werke* IX, p. 258
22. *Storm-Mörke Briefwechsel*, p. 89, 30.4.1878
23. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 105, 2.3.1885
24. Ibid., p. 106, 4.3.1885
25. Ibid.
26. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 109, 2.3.1885
27. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 162, 9.4.1885
28. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 107, 3.2.1885
29. As can be seen from a letter to Lina Strecker of 2.12.1877, ed. Borst, Storm awaited the publication of *Carsten Curator* with anxiety, convinced that it would bring discredit to his name as an artist:  

Mich anlangend, so versuche ich mich trotz "Carsten Curator" doch noch weiter in der Novellistik, trotz dringender Gefahr, meinen ganzen Ruf auf's Spiel zu setzen.

Cf. also *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* I, p. 168, note 31, 3.
30. Ed. G. Ranft, 1973, p. 78, 5.11.1877

31. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 157, 27.11.1882
32. He admitted afterwards to Heyse: "daß der Stoff nicht erschöpft ist, sehe ich nun wohl." (*Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 104, 7.2.1885).
33. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 382
34. Storm's awareness of this is intimated fleetingly in a letter of 20.2.1885 to his daughter Lisbeth (*Briefe an seine Kinder*, p. 232):  
Es geht uns allen hier leidlich wohl; nur fühlen Mama und ich das Schwinden unsrer Kräfte; doch habe ich am 1. d.M. meine Winterarbeit "eine stille Geschichte" und an Reichtum nicht mit "Grieshuus" zu vergleichen, vollendet.
35. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 341
36. *Ibid.*, p. 342
37. *Ibid.*, p. 341
38. Variations on this idea go back to the Ancients. Plato in the *Politicus* held that courage bred to courage through many generations culminates in insanity, and that the soul full of an excessive modesty mated to a similar soul becomes in the end useless and paralysed. Therefore, to achieve a proper mean, opposites should marry. (Cf. A.G. Roper, *Ancient Eugenics*, Oxford 1913)
39. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 382
40. F. Böttger, 1958, pp. 341 f.
41. T.J. Rogers, 1970, p. 168
42. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 164
43. Storm - Hartmuth Brinkmann, *Briefe* (G) I, p. 417, 5.4.1863
44. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 165
45. Diary entry after 19.10.1883, *Werke* (LL) III, pp. 912 f.
46. G. Ebersold, 1981, p. 96
47. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 164
48. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 106, 4.3.1885
49. Jensen - Storm, 3.4.1885, G. Storm, 1912/13, p. 224
50. Schmidt - Storm, letter of spring 1885, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 916
51. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 210, 7.8.1885
52. Schmidt - Storm, unpublished letter of spring 1885; cf. note 49.  
It must be remembered, however, that Schmidt, who did not wish to mar their friendship, was aware that Storm could not easily cope with negative criticism. While writing an essay on Storm

for the *Deutsche Rundschau* (printed in July 1880), Schmidt wrote concerning this problem on 30.12.1879 to Wilhelm Scherer:

Der Aufsatz über Storm wird mir recht schwer, gerade wegen der persönlichen Beziehungen. Der Mann ist nämlich sehr empfindlich . . .

He therefore had to resort to tactful contortions at times - "da heißt es einige Male einen diplomatischen Eiertanz aufführen" - as he put it, in order not to offend. (Cf. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 155, note 2).

53. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 105, 2.3.1885

54. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 112, 11.7.1885

55. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 210, 7.8.1885

56. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 341

57. Ibid.

58. The following quotations, all dating from the 1880s, make it clear that Storm had by no means given up his belief in the predetermined and hopeless nature of Hans' condition:

Storm - Heinrich Seidel, 9.12.1883, ed. H.W. Seidel, p. 203:

Ich habe keine Todten; aber einen Lebenden, der das Erbteil des Blutes mit sich schleppt.

Storm - Heinrich Kruse, 24.2.1886, ed. H. Kruse, p. 39:

der älteste Sohn, der die Last eines unglücklichen Familienerbes trägt, wovon nur mein Vater freiblieb, [ist] Arzt in Bayern.

Storm - Hedwig von Byern, 17.3.1886, ed. Brenke, p. 586:

Nun ist noch einer nach, dann hast Du von allen ein Wort gehört; mein Sorgenkind Hans . . . den Unglücklichen, der allein die unheilvolle Erbschaft aus seines Großvaters Familie trägt, von der sein Großvater allein unter seinen Brüdern völlig frei war; . . .

59. Cf. note 2.

60. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 104, 7.2.1885

61. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 107, 3.2.1885

62. "gleich diesem [dem Drama] verlangt sie [die Novelle] einen im Mittelpunkt stehenden Konflikt, von welchem aus das Ganze sich organisiert". (*Werke* IV, pp. 618 f.)

63. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 106, 4.3.1885

64. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* I, p. 94, 25.5.1878

65. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, pp. 26 f., 27.2.1878

66. *Storm-Mörke Briefwechsel*, p. 89, 30.4.1878

67. Storm - Albert Nieß, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 157, 22.5.1878

68. Cf. *Storm-Mörke Briefwechsel*, p. 89, 30.4.1878, *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, pp. 26 f., 27.2.1878, *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, p. 40, 3.11.1878. On this subject see also J.R. Hillier's dissertation:

"Theodor Storm's Novelle *Carsten Curator*: an evaluation of the terms 'Befreiungsdichtung' and 'das Peinliche'", Leicester 1973.

69. Storm - Pietsch 15.9.1878, *Werke* (G) III, p. 695
70. Cf. note 54
71. Cf. note 53
72. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 26, 27.2.1878
73. I. Schuster, 1971, pp. 163 f.
74. Storm - Hermione von Preuschen, ed. Ranft, p. 88, 21.9.1881
75. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 30, 28.7.1882
76. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 51, 13.11.1881
77. Storm - Gräfin Emilie Reventlow, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 781, December 1881
78. Storm - Ernst Esmarch, *Werke* (G) III, p. 734, 4.7.1882
79. Storm - Paetel, *Werke* (LL) II, p. 1045, 9.4.1880
80. Storm - Tönnies, ed. Meyer, p. 367, 25.10.1880
81. F. Stuckert, 1937, p. 521
82. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* II, p. 53, 22.10.1879
83. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, pp. 83 f., 9.6.1880
84. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 36, 17.4.1881
85. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 363
86. Storm - H. Keck, ed. Goens, p. 351, 15.8.1881
87. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 114, 14.8.1881
88. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 51, 13.11.1881
89. Storm - Paetel, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 797, 18.12.1881. The Novelle was in the end published not by Paetel, but by Westermann.
90. The original letter is lost, but the remark is quoted by Storm in a diary entry of 1.10.1881. Cf. *Werke* (LL) IV, p. 510
91. Petersen wrote to Storm on 30.7.1881 (*Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 104):  
 Das todte Kind hätte ich freilich gern entbehrt . . . das Elend hätte am Ende auch ohne jene Zugabe sich darstellen lassen.
92. Ibid.
93. L.B. Jennings, 1962, p. 185

94. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 104, 30.7.1881
95. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 157
96. This is probably the first part of the quotation: "Contra vim mortis, non est medicamen in hortis", a common saying of unknown origin. Cf. A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörterlichen Redensarten der Römer*, 1890, p. 228, and B. Stevenson, *Stevenson's Book of Quotations Classical and Modern*, 1974, p. 380.
97. Cf. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 157, and also her article: "Theodor Storm und E.T.A. Hoffmann", 1970, pp. 221 ff.
98. I. Schuster, 1970, p. 223
99. Storm - H. Schleiden, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 777, 9.11.1881
100. Wolfgang Kayser, 1957, p. 112
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid., p. 217
103. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 50, Sept 1881. Cf. also Storm - Margarethe Mörike, *Storm-Mörike Briefwechsel*, p. 101, 23.8.1881, and the diary entry of 1.10.1881, *Werke* (LL) IV, p. 511.
104. David Artiss, 1989, p. 104
105. Cited by I. Schuster, 1971, p. 209
106. D. Artiss, 1989, p. 107
107. M. Peischl, 1981, p. 227
108. Storm - Hartmuth & Laura Brinkmann, *Briefe* (G) I, pp. 516 f., 21.1.1868. Cf. E. Pastor, 1988, pp. 120-123
109. Storm - Brinkmann (*Briefe* (G) I, p. 516:  
Wie zur Dänenzeit kann ich nur stumm, die Faust geballt,  
den Schrei des Zorns in meiner Brust ersticken.  
Cf. Phia's "stumm getragenes ungeheures Leid" (III, 359).
110. E. Pastor, 1988, pp. 121, 123
111. Cf. Storm - Esmarch, *Werke* (G) III, p. 734, 4.7.1882. Replying to Esmarch's objections regarding the Etatsrat, Storm wrote:  
wie kommst Du junger Kiekindiewelt dazu, als ästhetische  
Forderung aufzustellen, daß in einer Dichtung bei jeder der  
darin auftretenden Gestalten deren Werden und Wachsen  
geschildert werden muß? Ist Dir das jemals bei "Falstaff"  
eingefallen?
112. R. Pitrou, Paris 1920, p. 599. He supports this statement by quoting from a letter of Storm to Paul Schütze of July 1877:  
Mon "Etatsrat", l'un de mes personnages les mieux réussis,  
est, à vrai dire, parent des fous shakespeariens, mais de  
ceux qui donnent le frisson, comme il n'y en a pas chez  
Shakespeare. (p. 600).

Unable to trace the original, both Stuckert, 1955, pp. 362 f., 468 and *Werke* (LL) III, p. 772, quote Pitrou as the source for this, and appear to accept the quotation as authentic. Schütze himself (1907, pp. 259 f.), alludes to the idea, but does not cite the letter. He writes:

der Dichter selbst bezeichnet diesen seinen Helden als einen Verwandten der Shakespeareschen Narren.

113. Storm - E. Esmarch, *Werke* (G) III, p. 734, 4.7.1882

114. Diary entry of 1.10.1881, *Werke* (LL) IV, p. 511

115. Storm's correspondence testifies to his awareness of the dangers of alcohol abuse. To Hans, for example, he wrote on 29.3.1872 (cited by Erichsen, 1955, p. 86):

Das Bier ist in bezug auf Euch Jungens eine von meinen Todesängsten . . . Gott verhöte, daß ich Dich "bierdick" nach Hause kommen sehe.

(Cf. also *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* I, p. 80, 4.2.1878 and p. 93, 25.5.1878). In Chapter One mention has already been made of Storm's strongly negative early impressions of student life in Kiel, including his disgust at the large amount of drinking that went on. Although he later wrote in large letters the words "dummes Zeug" above these comments, Stuckert (1955, p. 33) nonetheless contends that "als erster entscheidender Eindruck vom deutschen Studenten ist dieses Urteil unantastbar", for it clearly had a determining influence on his portrayal of university life in Novellen such as *Immensee*, *Auf der Universität* and *Der Herr Etatsrat*. When his young friend Ferdinand Tönnies was about to take up his studies at university in Jena, Storm wrote to him (ed. Meyer, p. 360, 15.5.1872):

Glauben Sie übrigens nicht, daß ich gegen Jena bin, ich habe nur kein Urteil darüber. Genießen Sie dort nur frisch weg Ihr junges Leben unter guten Genossen; aber eine herzliche Bitte! Gewöhnen Sie sich nicht an das verdammte Biersaufen. Sehen Sie sich immerhin nur die auf solchen Bier-Universitäten sich umtreibenden fetten Alcohol-Gestalten an, und schaudern Sie ein wenig dazu. Ich kann diese meine Bierpredigt wie gegen meine Jungens, so auch gegen Sie, lieber Ferdinand, nicht zurückhalten.

While Storm's cautious attitude to alcohol comes across clearly in such quotations, however, it is a misrepresentation to claim, as some have done, that he was an early forerunner of the "Abstinenzlerverbände". (Cf. J. Paulsen, "Der Alcohol im Leben und Werk schleswig-holsteinischer Dichter", 1926; J. Paulsen, "Das Lebensleid Theodor Storms", 1932; H. Sager, "Theodor Storm und sein Sohn Hans", 1959; P. Stubbe, "Zum Gedächtnis von Theodor Storm", 1917.) Paulsen writes:

Vielleicht wäre Theodor Storm, wenn er heute gelebt hätte, um seines Sohnes willen einer der Unsern geworden; zu seiner Zeit glänzte erst die Morgenröte unseres Kampfes auf. (Column 700).

Such an assertion is strongly tendentious, and scarcely accords with the fact that, even as late as 1884, Storm regarded *Oktoberlied* with its celebration of wine as one of his greatest poems (cf. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel* p. 197, 14.6.1884).

116. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 293

117. Storm - E. Esmarch, *Werke* (G) III, p. 734, 4.7.1882

118. E. Pastor, 1988, p. 133
119. Ibid., p. 136
120. W. Tschorn, 1978, p. 162
121. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 50, 13.11.1881
122. Ibid., pp. 51 f.
123. H. Naue, 1941, p. 74
124. E. Pastor, 1988, pp. 130 f.
125. Ibid.
126. Storm - H. Schleiden, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 777, 9.11.1881
127. Cf. Storm's comments to Schmidt, note 121
128. Cf. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 42, 6.7.1881:  
       es muß, besonders am Ende, bei Allem, was mit der Phia in  
       Beziehung steht, das Vulgäre, ja das Derbe vermieden  
       werden.  
       It was for this reason that he altered part of the text concerning  
       Phia. The original version is printed in *Werke* (LL) III, pp. 770  
       f.
129. Storm - H. Schleiden, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 777, 9.11.1881
130. Ibid.
131. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 293
132. Storm - Albert Nieß, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 220, 8.6.1881
133. W. Frühwald, 1984, p. 11
134. *Theodor Storm und Ivan Turgenev*, ed. K.E. Laage, 1967, p. 30
135. Ibid., p. 152, note 119. The similarity is also pointed out by I.  
       Schuster, 1970, p. 222 and D. Artiss, 1989, p. 107
136. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 293
137. F. Martini, *Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus  
       1848-1898*, 1962
138. L.B. Jennings, 1962, p. 189
139. *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 4, 23-38
140. Cf. Schuster, 1971, pp. 159 f.
141. Cf. note 2



CHAPTER FIVE: The Tragedy of Personal Compulsion  
 (Ein Bekenntnis, Zur Chronik von Grieshuus)

1. Theodor Fontane, "Sophokles: König Oedipus", *Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen*, vol. 2, *Theaterkritiken*, p. 144
2. A vivid example is found in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Dionysus punishes Pentheus for his *hubris* in opposing the god's worship.
3. Euripides' *Hippolytus*, for example, is a drama of vengeance, motivated by the jealousy of the goddess Aphrodite.
4. Aristotle, *Poetics*, Chapter 13
5. *Hamartia* was more often a mistake of judgement than a moral flaw. But it is helpful to remember, as H.D.F. Kitto (1951, pp. 170 f.) points out, that the Greeks did not distinguish as we do between the intellectual and the moral:  
 The word *hamartia* means 'error', 'fault', 'crime', or even 'sin'; literally, it means 'missing the mark', 'a bad shot'. We exclaim, 'How intellectualist the Greeks were!' Sin is just 'missing the mark'; better luck next time! . . . Our difficulty with . . . *hamartia* is that we think more in departments. *Hamartia*, 'A bad shot', does not mean 'Better luck next time'; it means rather that a mental error is as blameworthy, and may be as deadly, as a moral one.  
 For a detailed discussion of *hamartia* cf. D.W. Lucas, 1968, pp. 299-307
6. Vol I, p. 200
7. The books reviewed by Biese were the following:  
 O. Weissenfels, *Die Entwicklung der Tragödie bei den Griechen*, Gütersloh 1891  
 Th. Lipps, *Der Streit über die Tragödie*, Hamburg & Leipzig 1891  
 H.F. Mueller, *Beiträge zum Verständnis der tragischen Kunst*, Wolfenbüttel 1893
8. In Chapter Two we have already considered Biese's remark (1896, p. 105):  
 Es spuken, selbst in den neuesten Schulausgaben, noch immer die engen und ängstlichen und polizeilich strengen Begriffe von sittlichem Verschulden und gerechter Strafe als Grundelemente des Tragischen.
9. Ibid., p. 104
10. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 128, 15.1.1886
11. Ibid., p. 156, 15.7.1887
12. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 144, 1.1.1888
13. Storm sought the advice of his nephew Dr. Ludwig Glaevecke (1855-1905) who at that time was a houseman in the gynaecological clinic in Kiel. On 3.12.1887 Storm wrote to Petersen (*Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 176):  
 Mein "Bekenntnis" . . . ist in Kiel von der Facultät (d.h. von Dr. Glaevecke, meinem Neffen) geprüft u. approbirt; nur ist allerdings die rettende Operation von carcinoma uteri erst

vor 15 Jahren erfunden.

Ludwig Glaevecke's sources of information were the publications of his own former teacher Prof. Wilhelm Alexander Freund, a leading gynaecologist who had performed the first successful operation on a patient with cancer of the uterus.

14. Part of a letter from Prof. W.A. Freund to his friend and fellow gynaecologist Geheimrat R. Frommel was printed in the *Handbuch der Gynäkologie* (ed. J. Veit, 1899, Vol. 3, p. 444):

Hier ist der Platz, noch eine kuriose Reminiscenz aus jener für mich sehr bewegten Zeit der achtziger Jahre mitzuteilen. Nach meiner Übersiedlung hierher wurde mir Storms letzte Novelle "Ein Bekenntnis" zugesendet. Ein junger Arzt (einige Stellen lassen mich als seinen Lehrer erkennen) giebt dem Drängen seiner krebsskranken Frau auf Erlösung durch eine tötliche Morphiumgabe nach, liest kurz hinterdrein die "neue Methode der Total-Extirpation des Uterus" seiner Lehrers und gerät in trostlose Verzweiflung. Die Erzählung dieses traurigen Schicksals bildet den Inhalt des "Bekenntnisses". So romanhaft das Ganze klingt, so sind doch gewisse Einzelheiten (wörtliche Ausführungen aus meinen Publikationen über diesen Gegenstand) so realer Natur, daß ich mich innerst bedrängt mit der Frage ob "factum oder problema" an Storm wenden wollte, um nötigenfalls dem selbstquälerischen traurigen Helden seiner Novelle sehr wohlbegründete Aufrichtung und Entlastung bringen zu können. Da erfuhr ich, daß Storm sehr bald nach dieser Publikation gestorben war. . .

15. Information by courtesy of the Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft, Husum.
16. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 349
17. Ibid., p. 348
18. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 173
19. Ibid., pp. 173 f.
20. Ibid., p. 172
21. Ibid., p. 173
22. R. Carnaby, 1981/82, p. 157; cf. T.J. Rogers, 1970, p. 195
23. T.J. Rogers, 1970, p. 180
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 184
26. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 397
27. *Paul Heyse und Gottfried Keller im Briefwechsel*, p. 428, 29.12.1888
28. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel III*, p. 154, 25.6.1887
29. Ibid., p. 155, 15.7.1887

30. Ibid., p. 157, 17.7.1887
31. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 141, 29.9.1887
32. Ibid.
33. Cf. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 155, 15.7.1887 & *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 141, 29.9.1887
34. Joseph Anton Maximilian Perty (1804-1884) was a doctor and scientist. He wrote *Die mystischen Erscheinungen der menschlichen Natur* (1861) and *Die Realität magischer Kräfte und Wirkungen des Menschen* (1863). Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800-1875), theologian and philosopher, was the author of *Die Religion des neuen Weltalters* (1850), *Polydora, ein weltpoetisches Liederbuch* (1855), *Das Geisterreich in Glauben, Vorstellung, Sage und Wirklichkeit* (1867) and *Das Wunder, seine Bedeutung, Wahrheit und Notwendigkeit* (1874).
35. Cf. Ludwig Bäte, 1922, p. 311
36. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 397
37. J. Terpstra, 1983, p. 133
38. L.B. Jennings, 1962, p. 178
39. E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Werke*, vol. 2, p. 172. Schmidt wrote of Storm: "Starken Eindruck [machte] die Lektüre v. Amad. Hoffmann" (*Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* I, p. 17). Although Storm never directly acknowledged his debt to Hoffmann, his respect for him is frequently attested. Cf., for example, his proposal to include one of his stories in a suggested supplement to the *Deutscher Novellenschatz: Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* I, p. 86, 20.3.1875; also the closing lines of *Zwei Kuchenesser der alten Zeit* (*Werke* (G) IV, p. 449):  

O seliger Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, dessen Laterna magica ich an stillen Herbstabenden so gern noch vor mir aufstelle, weshalb schlägt nicht mehr die Stunde deiner Serapionsabende, auf daß ich dir diesen Kuchenesser der alten Zeit überliefern könnte! In welch wunderbaren, geheimnisvoll glühenden Farben würdest du durch deine Zaubergläser sein Bild an der grauen Wand erscheinen lassen.
40. Joseph von Eichendorff, *Werke*, ed. W. Rasch, p. 1180. Storm's admiration for Eichendorff and his familiarity with *Das Marmorbild* are indicated in *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* I, p. 152
41. Cf. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* I, p. 33, 23.3.1870; p. 41, 19.11.1870; p. 48, 25.10.1872; p. 49, 30.10.1872  
 It is interesting to note that the American writer Edgar Allan Poe, whom Storm read with relish and who is also mentioned in one of these letters to Heyse (19.11.1871), shared with Storm a fascination for the *Undine* motif which is revealed particularly in the stories *Eleonora*, *The Island of the Fay* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*. (Cf. Burton R. Pollin, "Undine in the works of Poe", 1975)
42. Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué, *Undine*, p. 48

43. Cf. the chapter in Artiss, 1978, entitled: "Time: Clocks, Bells and Butterflies", pp. 66-80
44. For a discussion of these motifs in Germanic folklore and superstition cf. *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, ed. H. Bächtold Stäubli: "Katze", vol. IV, 1107 ff.; "Kröte", vol. V, 625 ff.; "Schmetterling", vol. VII, 1244 ff.
45. T. Alt, 1964, p. 26
46. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 156, 15.7.1887
47. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 396
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p. 395
50. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 178, 13.9.1883
51. Storm refers here to Heyse's "Falkentheorie", outlined in the introduction to his *Deutscher Novellenschatz* (pp. 19 f.) and inspired by the killing of a falcon, for Heyse a turning point in Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (Fifth Day, Ninth Story).
52. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 37, 15.11.1882
53. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 83, 28.9.1883
54. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 189, 14.6.1884
55. *Storm-Mommsen Briefwechsel*, p. 63, 8.6.1884
56. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 91, 12.8.1884
57. Storm - A. Nieß, *Werke* (G) III, p. 761, 5.12.1884
58. Storm - Lisbeth, *Briefe an seine Kinder*, p. 232, 20.2.1885
59. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 316
60. Storm - H. Schleiden, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 867, 23.9.1884
61. *Storm-Fontane Briefwechsel*, p. 136, 28.10.1884
62. Ibid, p. 137, 2.11.1884
63. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 29, 13.7.1876
64. R. Pitrou, Paris 1920, pp. 652 ff.
65. *Werke* (LL) III, pp. 857 ff.
66. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 65, 24.10.1883
67. *Storm-Keller Briefwechsel*, p. 199, 10.11.1884
68. *Storm-Fontane Briefwechsel*, pp. 137f., 2.11.1884

69. J.M. Ritchie, 1962, pp. 78 f.
70. Otto Brahm, *Deutsche Rundschau* 42, 1885, pp. 473 f.
71. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 131, 12.9.1885
72. Storm gleaned a considerable amount of information for the background of war in the Novelle from Johannes Laß, *Sammlung einiger Husumischen Nachrichten* (Flensburg 1750/52). He not only used general material, but also directly adopted certain details of a geographical and chronological nature. Volume two contains the information: "Die Rußische Vor-Truppen kamen d. 24 ej. bey Hollingstett an" (Vol. 2, p. 40). Here "ej" is the latin abbreviation of "eiusdem", "of the same [month]", namely January.
73. *Werke* (ed. A. Köster) VIII, pp. 276 f.
74. F. Stuckert, 1955, p. 377
75. *Werke* (LL) IV, p. 525; diary entry of April/May 1883
76. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 316
77. W. Freund, 1987, p. 131
78. W. Brecht, 1925, p. 458
79. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 116
80. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel* III, p. 95, 4.10.1884
81. R. Pitrou, Paris 1920, p. 657; cf. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel* II, p. 76, 10.5.1883
82. *Hamlet*, Act V, Sc. II, 389-90
83. The war was fought between Sweden and Denmark, but was known locally as the "Polackenkrieg" due to the large number of Poles who had come to the aid of the Danes.
84. I. Schuster, 1971, p. 116
85. *Ibid.*, p. 117
86. Storm - Oskar Horn, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 74, 31.10.1873
87. F. Böttger, 1958, p. 318
88. W. Freund, 1987, p. 134
89. Cf. note 62
90. Cf. note 60
91. Storm - E. Alberti, *Briefe* (G) II, p. 244, 12.3.1882
92. Storm - H. Schleiden, *Werke* (LL) III, p. 777, 9.11.1881

CONCLUSION

1. Cf. *Storm-Petersen Briefwechsel*, p. 29, 13.7.1876
2. *Storm-Schmidt Briefwechsel II*, p. 50, Sept. 1881
3. Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke IX*, p. 248
4. *Storm-Heyse Briefwechsel II*, p. 26, 20.12.1876

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